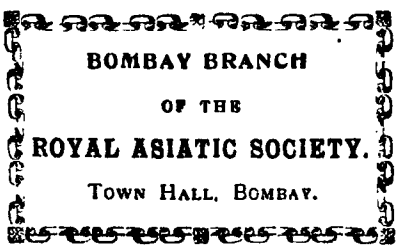
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SIBERIA AS IT IS.



POLITICAL PRISONERS IN SIBERIA. *Frontispiece.*

SIBERIA AS IT IS.

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ac.

BY

HARRY DE WINDT, F.R.G.S.,

AUTHOR OF

"FROM PEKIN TO CALAIS BY LAND," "A RIDE TO INDIA," ETC.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

HER EXCELLENCY

MADAME OLGA NOVIKOFF ("O. K.").

"On vous a dit que la Russie est un pays fermé; n'en croyez pas un mot. Tout ce que j'ai desiré voir, je l'ai vu, et on m'en a même montré plus que je n'en demandais."—VICTOR TISSOT.

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HOMMAGE DE L'AUTEUR

A

SON ALTESSE SERENISSIME

LA

PRINCESSE DE MONACO.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

TRUTH being the object aimed at, I have endeavoured to make the following account of the prisons of Russia and Western Siberia as plain and matter of fact as possible, without any attempt at colouring or romance.

The historical and ethnological portions of the book are partly taken from Mr. C. Eden's "Frozen Asia," while I am indebted to the Rev. Dr. Lansdell for some interesting and reliable information anent the island of Sakhalin. The remainder of the work is compiled entirely from personal observation and experiences.

HARRY DE WINDT.

PARIS,
January, 1892.

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INTRODUCTION.

MR. HARRY DE WINDT has undoubtedly shown courage in asking me to write a few words of preface to his book on Russian prisons.

Me, of all the world! Anybody who has ever heard of me knows that I am a thorough Russian, a staunch believer in Greek orthodoxy, in autocracy and nationalism, convinced of the grand future of Russia as of my own existence, and a prison directress to boot! In fact, never paying the homage of hypocrisy in disguising my real self, I represent all that the English people have the greatest dislike to.

I hesitated to comply with Mr. de Windt's request, because I felt that my sympathies with his honest and energetic investigations might

injure his book rather than commend it to English readers.

Another very important consideration occurred to me. To form a proper opinion of the Russian prisons, it is necessary to possess, what English people certainly do not possess, some knowledge of the ordinary conditions of life in our country. A preface to any book on Russia ought, in fact, to be somewhat of an introduction into the penetralia of our innermost existence. But in giving real facts about our country, I have the feeling of printing advertisements about ourselves—to us Russians a very antipathetic work indeed.

Russia is, over a great extent, a land of stoicism, fortified by Christianity—not a bad basis for the formation of character, after all, but it is a hard school. Our country life is an important study. It is full of self-denial, of hardships, of privations. Indeed, in some parts peasant life is so hard that we, the upper classes, could scarcely endure it.

Landed proprietors are generally in close intercourse with their ex-serfs. The latter,

though perfectly free and themselves land-owners, from the fact that their former masters have at heart their welfare, naïvely think that the latter are still under obligation to furnish help when needed. This irrational relationship is generally accepted good-naturedly by the ex-masters, though very often it involves great material sacrifices. We could all give our personal experiences of village life, and I, for one, venture to do so, though there are many others better qualified.

To visit the sick and the poor is a common duty recognized by all in our country, although the discharge of this duty sometimes is rather an ordeal. How overcrowded and dark are their dwellings! How poor their daily food! (The only approach to the condition that I know of in the United Kingdom is in the poverty-stricken districts of Ireland.) Yet those who lead that rough life seem strong and happy, on the whole. They will make merry jokes, and after a long day's heavy work, from sunrise to sunset, return home from the fields, singing and dancing.

Injudicious and indiscriminate charity would

do harm here as elsewhere. In illustration of this I will mention the following from my own experience.

My son, a newly appointed Zemski Natchalñik (Zemski chief), has recently founded two schools on our Tamboff estate—as has been done by other landed proprietors in the same province, such as Mr. E. Narishkine, Mr. Garainoff, etc.

The principal local representatives of the Church and the chiefs of our local school inspectors were invited to discuss the programme of the teaching and management of these schools —one for boarders (future primary school teachers), the other a daily school for our parish children. (All our schools for the people are, and have always been, free of charge.)

The educational scheme met with almost unanimous approval, but when the boarding arrangements came to be discussed, with suggestions about "light mattresses and pillows," they were met by a general outburst of disapproval.

"Here you are wrong. Why should you spoil them, and make them unfit for their usual life,

by accustoming them to unnecessary luxuries? The utmost you should provide, as a comfort for peasant boys, is some straw, and a plain bench to sleep on. Nothing more."

It may perhaps interest my readers to know that there is such a thirst for learning amongst our peasant children, that candidates come in overwhelming numbers, and this happens to all our educational institutions — they are overcrowded to the last degree. The population increases more quickly than church and school accommodation for it. That inconvenience is also noticeable in our prisons. But to people accustomed to a very hard life, would it be a punishment if, instead of suffering discomfort for their crimes, they were surrounded with what to them would appear extreme luxury? Where is one to draw the line between necessaries and luxuries? A prison ought to be a punishment, not a reward for crimes.

In visiting the prisons I have heard the remark that some of the convicts would not have committed their misdeeds had they possessed

at home half of the comfort provided in the prison. They also know that whilst they are away, good care is taken of their children. I remember a female prisoner, who had to suffer a year's punishment for theft and smuggling, whose looks of distress and misery forcibly struck me. Knowing that she was near the end of her term, I asked how it was that she did not look happier.

"I am pining for my boy; I feel sure he is dead. I wrote to him twice, but he never replied," answered she, sobbing. "He was taken up as a beggar and a vagabond by the Beggars' Committee."

"Well," said I, "since you can tell me where he may be found, I will go and see him at once, and you shall know the exact truth about him. Wait patiently till I come back."

Off I went to the "Beggars' Institution," which is in close connection with the prisons, and had the boy brought to me. He looked clean and healthy.

"Your mother sends you her blessing," I

began; "she is in good health, but grieves that you never answered her letters. Have they not reached you?"

"Oh yes, they have, but I cannot write. I began learning here, and can only write O's and pothooks."

As I always provide myself with writing materials on visiting the prisons, and am always ready in deserving cases to write letters, dictated to me by illiterate prisoners, I offered my services to the little beggar.

He seemed radiant. "Yes, tell her I am very well fed here, three times every day. Food plentiful."

"What else?" asked I. "Would you not like to see your mother? Don't you go to church every Sunday, and don't you pray for her?"

"Oh yes. Tell her to come to live with me here."

You should have seen the joy of the mother when I brought her this very undiplomatic despatch, and the interest created amongst her fellow-prisoners!

To help the wretched is a pleasure thoroughly appreciated by Russians. It is absurd to preach to us charity and compassion. We are brought up in those notions from our childhood. Christianity with us is not a vague term; it represents a very clear "categorical principle" which forms a link between all of us, from the Emperor down to the humblest peasant. Our highest classes are very well represented in that respect. First comes our Empress, who is the soul of charity and compassion. I never heard of any appeal made to her in vain. Nor could anybody, I think, be kinder than the Emperor. His aunt, the Grand Duchess Constantine, notwithstanding the endless demands on her generosity, has just undertaken to feed a thousand of famine-stricken peasants in our district till next harvest. I could also give other examples from amongst the Imperial family.

Then, coming to a lower rank, we have for instance the procurator of the Holy Synod, Mr. Pobédonostzeff and his wife. The latter, though far from strong in health, takes care of two large

schools, visiting them almost daily; with the support and sympathy of her husband she collects large sums of money every year, in order to send to the prisoners of Sakhalin (our worst criminals) quantities of clothes, useful tools, tobacco and toys, writing materials, and religious books. Our lower classes only care for "Divine literature," as they call it. Religious books are in great demand in every part of Russia, which helps to defeat Nihilistic teaching, and saves the people from that criminal folly.

Or take another well-known case: a man of good birth and worldly prospects, a distinguished Moscow professor, who, without any of that self-advertisement which seems to be the necessary stimulus to similar efforts in Western Europe, buried himself in the country, and there founded a school, which has served as a model for ten or twelve other schools in the same province, and which he superintends and guides with fatherly care, and in strictly Greek orthodox views. He also organized a large temperance movement, which is now spreading throughout Russia.

I could give numerous instances to show that philanthropy, far from being unknown, is widely practised in Russia. In fact, it permeates all our work, including the prisons.

Our great Empress, Catherine II., used to say, "Better pardon ten criminals than punish one innocent." This became a favourite saying with us, and perhaps accounts for the leniency of our juries, which is often carried too far. For what right have we to endanger the public safety by allowing crime to reign unchecked?

In England murderers are quietly hanged, and this happens even pretty often. According to us, this is going too far. How are you to manifest Christian compassion and love to sinners when they are so quickly and definitely disposed of?

What chance have they to repent? Capital punishment is repellent to public feeling in Russia, and has been used in cases which, thank God, were quite exceptional and extremely rare. With us, only the very worst crimes are punished with imprisonment for life. And even for these it

may at all events be said, "While there is life there is hope."

Very great improvements have been introduced in our prison system. More are to follow. We see our shortcomings better than ignorant *dilettante* critics, whose only object is to excite artificial indignation.

These questions are very important and complicated; but, as Thiers used to say, "Prenez tout au sérieux, rien au tragique."

Those who wish to know the Russian prisons as they are in the year 1891, have now the opportunity of doing so, by studying Mr. Harry de Windt's most interesting and trustworthy book. I must add that he has seen more of Russian territory than I have. Unfortunately, I have never visited Siberia: he has been there twice. Our prison authorities, both in Europe and in Asia, convinced of his sincere desire to write "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth," opened the prison doors to him whenever asked, by day or by night. I am happy that they have done so. Mr. de Windt deserves

confidence, not only as an able writer and keen observer, but because, if he will permit me to say so, he shows himself to be a gentleman. By this we understand a man imbued with the conviction that honour is not a commercial commodity, to be trafficked with or exchanged for either notoriety or money.

The more his interesting work is read the more convinced do we become that whatever he writes, be it in praise or blame, he thoroughly believes! An Englishman has his own views and feelings. By all means let him express them freely, so long as his criticism is guided by a genuine respect for truth. In that direction Mr. de Windt's book deserves imitation, and is a wholesome contrast to that literature, so popular in England, which is chiefly based upon imagination and our police court reports. Every country having prisons must be supposed to have criminals, and any collector of horrors can easily fabricate the most dreadful pictures. In Russia sketches of this kind, purposely misleading the public, would of course be ridiculed. In England,

unfortunately, the grosser the exaggeration the better it pays! But not everything should be considered from either a penny-a-liner or a Stock Exchange point of view. Nor, even judged by that standard, is it admissible to obtain money on false pretences. England has nothing to gain by not only ignoring the truth, but by acting under absolute misrepresentations and calumnies. I declare and insist upon this positive fact. Credulous readers of English newspapers—these latter-day gospels—are misled, shamefully misled, by a great portion of the press. People were angry with me last year when I reminded them of the force represented by Russia. I did say that she is a great military power, with an army of two millions, whom no European country dares to attack single-handed. I might have added what is of even more importance, namely, her capacity to transform her humble everyday life into a heroism which has, more than once in moments of great national trial, astonished the world. Might not a nation of this character be a useful friend and ally?

How I wish I had the miraculous gift of curing moral blindness! What a grand and edifying spectacle would be that of the two great Christian civilizing powers, trustful and united, working together not only in Europe, but especially in Asia, where their present policy is only hindering the work of civilization amongst alien races!

Thus any English writer, helping towards a true knowledge of Russia as she really is, is doing good service to a great Christian cause.

Amongst these is Mr. Harry de Windt, and I, as a Russian, can only wish him and his book "God-speed." If *noblesse oblige, Christianisme oblige plus encore!*

OLGA NOVIKOFF.

CLARIDGE'S HOTEL,
BROOK STREET.

SIBERIA AS IT IS.

CHAPTER I.

LONDON TO ST. PETERSBURG.

"THE prisons of Siberia! You may be sure the Russian Government will never allow you to see *them*."

Such is the opinion of the friend with whom I discuss an after-dinner cup of coffee and cigarette on the balcony of that cosiest of hostelries, the New Falcon Inn, Gravesend. It is the evening of the 20th July, 1890. London is stifling and malodorous. Even here there is scarcely a breath of air stirring, as red and green lights, heralded by shrill whistle or screaming steam-syren, move slowly and mysteriously through the grey heat mist veiling the river. My

companion sails to-night for the blue fjords and snowy peaks of Norway. His assertion is incorrect. Still is he sceptical, when I explain that permission has already been granted me to visit the penal establishments in question, and that, armed with a passport and the necessary credentials, I start to-morrow for St. Petersburg, *en route* for Siberia.

This was not my first visit to the Russian Australia. A journey from Pekin to Moscow by the Tea Caravan route in 1887 had already opened my eyes to the fact that Asiatic Russia is anything but the land of desolation authors of sensational fiction would have us believe. The majority of people in England picture Siberia as cold, sterile, and under deep snow the greater part of the year; as peopled chiefly by skin-clad aborigines, prisoners, and wolves. This was once my idea of a country which contains at least half a dozen well-built cities with all the accessories of highest civilization, and is blessed, in summer, with the finest and healthiest climate in the world. The variations

of temperature are, however, considerable. This is only natural when we consider that this huge territory measures five thousand miles from east to west, over two thousand miles from north to south, and covers nearly five and three-quarter millions of square miles. Mr. Kennan, the American traveller, has perhaps given the best and most lucid illustration of the enormous size of Siberia. He says :—

"If it were possible to move entire countries from one part of the globe to another, you could take the whole United States of America, from Maine to California, and from Lake Superior to the Gulf of Mexico, and set it down in the middle of Siberia without touching anywhere the boundaries of the latter territory. You could then take Alaska and all the States of Europe (with the exception of Russia), and fit them into the remaining margin like the pieces of a dissected map, and after having thus accommodated all of the United States, including Alaska, and all of Europe except Russia, you would still have more than three hundred thousand square miles

of Siberian territory to spare—in other words, you would still leave unoccupied in Siberia an area half as large again as the Empire of Germany!"

The object of my first voyage across Asia was somewhat vague and indefinite.* Perhaps the fact that but three Englishmen had accomplished the journey, and that with considerable difficulty, finally determined me to embark on that weary pilgrimage of six thousand miles; a daily record, for nearly three months, of privation, dirt, and discomfort; the harder to bear from the utter absence of interesting matter met with the whole way from the Chinese frontier to Moscow. Now, at any rate, there would be no cause for complaint on that score. The prisons of Siberia were, by order of the Imperial Government, open to my inspection, without any conditions whatsoever as to date or duration of visit.

We are ever in search of new playgrounds. Some of my readers may, after perusing these

* See "From Pekin to Calais by Land." By H. de Windt. Chapman and Hall. 1887.

pages, be inclined to desert more familiar and civilized paths of travel, in favour of the (so-called) wilds of Siberia. An important item being luggage, here is a list of mine, for the benefit of those who may follow in my footsteps. Two large soft leather bags (with strong locks),* a Gladstone bag, and small medicine chest are my sole *impedimenta* as I enter the tidal train at Charing Cross on the morning of the 21st July. The bags described as soft must be cornerless, as they form the traveller's bed when posting in sleigh or tarantass.† A thick fur pelisse (reindeer, lined with lynx), a bashlik,‡ and three railway rugs were also taken, for the nights, even in the height of summer, are very cold. The two former articles must be purchased in Russia. More luggage than this is unnecessary, but a dress suit is essential. It is the *costume de rigueur* for morning calls in Siberia.

* Procurable at Silver and Co., Cornhill, E.C.

† Russian posting carriage.

‡ A head covering and neckerchief in one, made of camel's hair, and worn by Russian soldiers.

I am to apply for my credentials at St. Petersburg. A journey to this city would, under other circumstances, seem long and tedious, but Tomsk, the capital of Western Siberia, is my destination, and the railway run across Europe pales into insignificance in comparison ;—Tomsk : due north of Calcutta, and nearly three thousand miles from the Russian capital !

The Channel, that "bar sinister" to the shores of England and France, is swiftly and smoothly crossed. A cool starlit night, followed by a stifling sweltering day in Paris, and I embark, the same evening, on the night mail direct for St. Petersburg. The distance is little short of seventeen hundred miles, but as, with the exception of the ten hours' daylight run from Cologne to Berlin, the entire transit is made in comfortable *wagon lits*, the sixty odd hours is no great hardship. What a blessing the inventor of these cars conferred upon mankind! Contrast this journey with that of ten or fifteen years ago : cooped up in a first-class compartment for nearly four consecutive days with perhaps half a dozen

fellow-passengers. Now, how different. A comfortable bed, permission to smoke, and a wash and change in the morning. Truly we live in an age of luxury!

But the break at Cologne should be done away with. The change from roomy car to a small stuffy carriage, all red velvet and greasy antimacassars, reeking of orange-peel and stale cigar-smoke, is a rude shock, especially at 8 a.m. Will the Germans, by the way, never understand the art of travelling in comfort? A cup of tepid, gritty coffee at Cologne, some tough, half-raw beef, floating in grease, at Hanover, are the only provisions procurable the whole livelong day.

But the weather is bright and cool, and more than atones for these minor discomforts, as we rattle along, through the pleasant, sunny Rhineland, over field after field of golden corn, green valleys with clear, flower-girt brooks, rippling through the deep rich grass, across belts of dark, fragrant pine forest. We have the carriage to ourselves. "None but English and lunatics

travel first-class in Germany," say the natives. Maybe, but there is a distinct advantage, nevertheless, in being able to enjoy the lovely landscape from either side at will. The fields are deserted to-day, the third-class cars crowded, for it is Sunday. Towards sunset we enter a station typical of the country: a pretty châlet-like building embowered in lime trees, rose bushes, and honeysuckle. The narrow platform is crowded with holiday-makers: plain and perspiring German females, still plainer and somewhat inebriated German men, and a sprinkling of infantry soldiers, with high stocks and stiffly starched white trousers, looking as though they had just walked out of a toy-box. Black-coated, white-tied kellners hurry to and fro with trays of lager beer, fruit, cigars, and a tempting-looking amber-coloured beverage, in which float strawberries, slices of peach, and ice. Every one is laughing, talking, and singing, as if *la revanche* were still in the dark distant future. Suddenly a bell rings: the crowd surges backwards—adieus are exchanged, and to the husky strains of "Die

Wacht am Rhein" (in many keys) we move out again into the open country—fresh, pine-scented, and deepening in the twilight.

At dusk we reach Berlin. The capital of Germany is ever associated in my mind with two things: the prettiest women and ugliest monument in the world. The "Bois de Boulogne," "Prater," "Nevski Prospect," even Bond Street itself, can show nothing to compare, in point of beauty, with the crowds of lovely faces to be seen on a fine summer afternoon in "Unter den Linden." But who can have devised the hideous gilt figure that commemorates the victories of 1870! Viewed by the unpatriotic stranger, it simply represents a stunted and ungraceful female, in indecently short petticoats, playing quoits in a gale of wind. Here (artistically speaking) France is already avenged!

A celebrated English statesman lately remarked that "railway travelling in Russia is the most luxurious in Europe." This any one who has travelled in the country will fully endorse, but I would add: "the *douanes* of Russia are

the least troublesome in the world." Many in England are unaware of the former fact—few will believe the latter. But it is so. A German subject is, at the frontier, occasionally put to inconvenience (the political agitators of that nation are legion), but a Frenchman seldom—an Englishman never. Indeed, I doubt if the custom-houses of any European country are as lenient as those of Russia where there are no real grounds for suspicion. In my own case, three hundred cigars and an unlimited supply of tobacco were passed duty free. A "Kodak camera," however, excited some suspicion, and was minutely examined in a private room.

Eydtkunen is the last station on the German line. A piece of neutral ground is then passed, wild, and uncultivated, and the train slowly crosses a light iron bridge spanning a narrow stream. On the far side, near a black and white sentry box, stands a solitary figure in drab-coloured greatcoat, high boots, and flat white linen cap, leaning on a rifle with a fixed bayonet. It is a Cossack. We are in Russia, and a few

moments later alight at Wirballen, the first railway station in the empire of the Great White Czar.

What a change! At Eydtkunen in Germany, all was dirt, discomfort, and confusion; here, in Russia, everything is in perfect order, from the cool spacious *salle-a-manger* with its array of snowy linen, glittering glass, and bright silver, to the huge gendarme in grey and red, who receives your passport as you enter the buffet, and politely requests you not to hurry yourself. There is plenty of time for both food and digestion. No greasy scalding soup, no petrified sandwiches, nor warm lemonade here, but the *cuisine* perfect, wines well iced, and tea (served *à la Russe*) delicious. In a corner of the waiting-room is a book-stall, kept by a pretty dark-eyed girl in national dress. The shelves are stocked with the latest French and English novels (among the former Zola preponderates), German and Russian works, but (curiously enough) not a single English newspaper, although *Le Temps*, *Figaro*, and *Gil Blas* are in great demand.

A good hour is allowed for *déjeûner*. Then passports are returned to all save one (a shabby-looking individual from Switzerland), and we resume our journey. The change of *coup d'œil* is now striking, but scarcely favourable to the country we have entered. Snug homesteads, trim hedgerows, and well-cultivated fields have given place to tumble-down log huts and carelessly sown crops, intersected by vast tracts of wild waste land and pine forest. The peasantry, however, seem industrious. Both sexes are working in the fields till long after eight o'clock, the former in scarlet *caftans*, bright dabs of colour relieving the monotony of the dull brown landscape.

We travel slowly, and stoppages are frequent, though apparently unnecessary, for we neither take up nor set down passengers. The smaller stations are neat and picturesque. All are alike: one-storied wooden buildings of a reddish-brown colour, with light green roofs of sheet iron. Many are covered with vines, and surrounded by pretty gardens. On the arrival of a train there

is no hurry, no confusion. Three bells are rung —one on entering the station, the second when half the stopping time has elapsed, a third on the point of departure. Railway travelling in Russia must be intensely irritating to those pressed for time and anxious to reach their destination; for others it is the most perfect in the world.

Sunrise on the last morning of our journey discloses a flat marshy plain extending on all sides to the horizon, with, at intervals, large lakes of stagnant water, black and sedge bound, and swarming with wild fowl of all kinds. Towards midday we are plunged in forest; nothing to be seen, mile after mile, but endless vistas of pine, fir, and birch trees. My fellow-traveller, a loquacious American, who joined us at Wirballen, is of opinion that the scenery of his country would "knock spots" out of that of the Czar. He then proceeds to give vent to democratic views in a loud tone of voice, which, as there are two Government officials within earshot, is scarcely entertaining. I beg him, but in vain,

to desist, and am compelled at last to seek refuge in an adjoining compartment. It is hot and crowded. The reflection that my talkative friend's conduct will, if persisted in, probably (and justly) land him in the fortress of SS. Peter and Paul, is but poor consolation for the six hours of discomfort I have to endure before the journey's end.

The scenery, towards five o'clock p.m., becomes more accentuated. Villages and pretty villas, orchards and gardens, appear on either side. Then comes Gatchina, with its palace, Swiss châlets, and trout streams. A Grand Duke, on a visit to the Emperor, delays the train an unnecessarily long time, while he descends from a saloon carriage, and is met on the red-carpeted platform by a glittering staff in white, and green and silver uniforms. A few versts more and we are rattling over the swampy plain that surrounds the capital, and by six o'clock are in sight of the low sombre buildings, golden domes, and tapering spires of St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER II.

ST. PETERSBURG.

MONSIEUR DEMETRIUS KAMORSKI, Inspector-General of his Imperial Majesty's prisons in Siberia, is about as unlike the typical Russian prison official (as represented in England) as can well be. I expected to find an austere, elderly individual, hardened, if not brutalized, by years of contact with criminals—a vulgar, dictatorial man, sly as a fox and as close as wax. I am somewhat surprised therefore when received, on calling at his bright, cheerful apartments near the "Nevski Prospect," by a genial, pleasant-looking gentleman, about thirty-five years old, with laughing blue eyes and a fair moustache. M. Kamorski is fashionably attired in a light grey suit, varnished boots, and wears

a gardenia in his button-hole. We converse for a while on indifferent topics; but my host seems far more inclined to discuss the merits of this year's Derby winner, or Sarah Bernhardt's latest Parisian "success," than to refer to my impending visit to the grim establishment under his super-



MONSIEUR DEMETRIUS KAMORSKI.

vision. But M. Kamorski can work as well as play, as Government reports will testify. During his ten years' administration under the new *régime*, the prisons of Old Siberia are a thing of the past, and his name, among both political and criminal exiles, is a by-word for integrity and justice.

"The papers authorizing you to visit the prisons of Tomsk, Tobolsk, and Tiumen will be ready in ten days," says my host, while tea and cigarettes are served by a Japanese attendant, who accompanied the inspector to St. Petersburg after his last tour through the most remote prison districts, barely a ten days' journey from Japan. "They will be delivered to you at your hotel. But why, may I ask, do you confine your visits to those three prisons? Why not go on and see Irkoutsk, Nertchinsk, Karà—even Sakhalin, if you wish? We are not afraid of being inspected," he adds, with a smile, "notwithstanding the entertaining reports that have made such a stir in your country of late."

I explain that, having once crossed Siberia, I have no wish to repeat the experiment, especially in winter.

"The credulity of the English has always amused me," runs on my host, carried away by his subject. "They will believe an American journalist, but not their own countrymen; I mean so far as our Russian penal system is concerned.

What authority have they for the truth of these so-called Siberian atrocities, save that of the *Century Magazine?* Dr. Lansdell, a clergyman of the Church of England and an experienced traveller, Cotteau, Meignan, Michie, Boulangier, you yourself, have all crossed Siberia. Have you seen anything of the kind? Pah! it is too ridiculous!" adds the inspector, puffing furiously at a cigarette.

I must own that I could not gainsay the soundness of his argument.

"Well, it will be for another time," resumes my host after a pause. "You could go by sea to Japan, and from thence, *viâ* Vladivostok, to Nertchinsk, in under three weeks. I wish you clearly to understand," he continues, "that you will not find everything *couleur de rose.* Far from it. Reforms are slow in Russia, for money is scarce, though you will see prisons already completed in St. Petersburg and Moscow equal, and perhaps superior, to any in England. Our new cellular prison here, for instance, cost nearly two millions of roubles, and was recently acknowledged by one of your own countrymen, con-

nected with English penal establishments, to be the finest in the world. As regards your voyage: Tomsk and Tiumen are the prisons lately described in the English press (and by people who have never even seen them!) as 'hells upon earth.' Heaven forgive them! I suppose horrors make your papers sell. There must be a motive for these fabrications. Nevertheless I do not deny that you will find the Tomsk forwarding prison bad as regards accommodation; and Tiumen is, I admit, in a very unsatisfactory condition. And why? For the simple reason that the question was mooted in 1887 of abolishing transportation to Siberia, and sending convicts by sea direct to Sakhalin. The Government did not therefore feel justified in repairing the old prisons or building new ones, for the simple reason that it would have been a useless expense. Now, however, that matters are definitely settled, the work is progressing as fast as possible. As you say in England, 'Rome was not built in a day.' Bad as the prisons are," added M. Kamorski, with a meaning smile, "I

think you will hardly find them 'hells upon earth;' and I am afraid, if you are in search of sensational matter, you will be grievously disappointed."

"Shall I be permitted to converse with political prisoners?"

"Most certainly. See everything, go everywhere, converse with whom you please; my instructions are that you be allowed to do so. Also that your papers shall not specify the time of your visit to the prisons or prison barges. You may go now—in a month—in six months—next year if you like; then, perhaps, they will not say in England that things have been prepared for you. As I told you before, we do not fear inspection—from people who tell the truth," he added drily, as I took my leave.

Although it improves on acquaintance, St. Petersburg is not a taking city. It lacks the originality of Moscow, the picturesqueness of Odessa, and is anything but imposing at first sight to the traveller from France or Germany. Although the principal thoroughfares are broad

and regular, the private buildings are, with few exceptions, ugly and stunted looking; while the open-work iron porticoes, generally painted a vivid light blue or green, which decorate the fronts of every two or three doors, increase the tawdry, gimcrack appearance of the streets. The shops, too, have a shoddy appearance, not improved by gaudy sign-boards, illustrating, in the crudest style and colour, the wares sold within. Even in the "Nevski Prospect," the Regent Street of St. Petersburg, nearly three miles long, there are but a dozen really good shops, principally those of French jewellers, whose prices would put even their countrymen of the Rue de la Paix to the blush, but whose windows are marvels of richness and taste. With these solitary exceptions, everything has a cheerless, squalid appearance even on the brightest day. The very *plaques* bearing the name "Nevski Prospect" have long since lost their blue enamel, the name being roughly painted in white letters on the rust.

St. Petersburg is, perhaps, the easiest city in the world to find one's way about in. The

needle-like spire of the Admiralty makes an excellent landmark, for the three principal thoroughfares diverge from it to various parts of the city. The Czar's capital has been aptly named the "Venice of the North." It is built over numberless islets formed by canals intersecting the city. The largest of these, the "Moika," "Fontanka," and Catherine Canal,* run at right angles to the Nevski. To this cause is probably due the constant sickness in spring-time, when the ice melts and the congealed filth and sewage of the winter months escape. The stenches are then unbearable. But St. Petersburg is never a healthy city. It has the highest death-rate of any capital in Europe, with the exception, perhaps, of Constantinople.

A walk up the Nevski speedily disabuses the stranger as to the reported intolerance of the Russian Government for any but the Orthodox Greek Church.† He will pass (in less than

* Alexander II. was assassinated here. A church has been erected on the spot.

† So numerous are the Jews in St. Petersburg, and so free in a practical sense that they are now (1891) completing a

a mile) a Dutch church, a Lutheran church, a Catholic church, and a Jewish synagogue! Beyond this, on the right hand, is the "Gostinoi Dvor," or bazaar, a collection of low sheds built in a square, and occupied by merchants of every conceivable article, from a toy watch to a ship's anchor. As in the East, each street or alley has its trade. The one devoted to the gold- and silver-smiths is perhaps the most interesting, next to that where *ikons*, or sacred images, are sold. Some of the latter are of great beauty, and, embellished with solid gold and precious stones, are worth many thousand of roubles.

Hard by the bazaar is the "Douma," a high fire tower with signal flagstaff. Beyond it is the Anitchkoff Palace, a plain-looking red-brick building in which the present Czar resides, the Winter Palace on the banks of the Neva being only used for state ceremonies. In the Maison Ligatchef, a lodging-house immediately opposite

synagogue, erected at the expense of nearly half a million roubles.

the Anitchkoff, Trigoni, one of the prime instigators of the murder of Alexander II., lodged for some days before the crime was perpetrated. The spot where it occurred, on the banks of the Catherine Canal, is but a stone's throw distant. The deed is still fresh in the memory of most of my readers, but the circumstances under which it took place having been given me by an official of high standing in the Russian police, a brief history of the facts may not be without interest.

The assassins brought to trial were six in number, the actual murderer being killed by the same bomb that struck down the Emperor: Nicholas Jeliaboff, 30; Sophie Perovska, 27; Nicholas Risákoff, 19; Kibaltchik (a mining engineer), 34; Gabriel Michailoff, 32; and Hessy Helfmann, a young Jewess, 18. Elnikoff, who threw the fatal bomb and died soon after, was a mere lad; but Risákoff, Jeliaboff, and Kibaltchik, were already known to the police at the time of the murder; Risakoff for taking part in the revolutionary movement of 1880, Jeliaboff

as being member of the "Narodna Volia" (a society formed for the special purpose of assassinating the Czar), and Kibaltchik as being suspected of making the bombs with which it was intended to blow up the Imperial train near Odessa in 1870. Jeliaboff was actually in prison when the murder of the Czar occurred. Upon hearing of the crime, he confessed that he had been told off for the deed, and that, had he been free, he would himself have committed it. Jeliaboff, therefore, claimed the right to be tried on the capital charge, a request which was granted.

Of the women, Sophie Perovska,* a countess by rank, had joined the cause, like other young and romantic women of her age and position, for want of something better to do. A life of idleness in youth, and a music-master of Socialistic tendencies, were the primary causes of the wild, aimless career that brought her to the scaffold. The other female prisoner, Hessy Helfmann, a Jewish work-girl, is said to have been drawn

* Sophie Perovska was the illegitimate daughter of a former Governor-General of St. Petersburg.

into the plot by her lover—a Nihilist—who, himself, escaped.

The assassination was preceded by several less important conspiracies that were fortunately frustrated in time. About a month previously a mine, containing nearly a hundred pounds of dynamite, was discovered in the basement of a cheesemonger's shop, on the Catherine Canal. The intention was to blow up the Anitchkoff Palace. Had the attempt succeeded several houses must also have fallen, and the loss of life have been considerable. The arrangements on the fatal day, however, were so complete that, had the Emperor taken another route, the result would probably have been the same. Contrary to the advice of General Loris Melikoff, then Chief of Police, his Majesty had driven to an inspection of troops. One of the assassins, Risákoff, afterwards boasted that every street by which he could possibly return was posted with men and women provided with bombs. Next to Risákoff and Elnikoff, Sophie Perovska appears to have taken the most active part in the proceedings, for

she undertook the distribution of the bombs (the one that actually killed the Emperor was only made the preceding night), and, under her personal supervision, the murder was carried out.

It was planned as follows:—Should the Czar pass by the Sadovaya (a street near the Catherine Canal) Risákoff was to meet him. In the Manége Square at the end of the canal, Elnikoff and Michailoff were to stand. If the Imperial carriage did not come that way the conspirators were to meet in Michael Street, near Sadovaya Street, where Perovska was to give the signal (by waving a white handkerchief) to go to the Catherine Canal and there await their victim. This is what actually happened:—Risákoff on getting the sign from Perovska ran to the canal just in time to throw his bomb, but unsuccessfully, under the horses. Elnikoff, who had preceded him, was standing some way further on towards the Nevski; and after the first explosion, threw the second bomb, killing both the Emperor and himself.

A bystander, one Gorokoff, gave the most lucid account of the affair at the trial. He stated

that as he was walking slowly along the Catherine Canal in the direction of the Nevski, a tall, slight young man, with long fair hair, dressed in a fur cap and long dark overcoat, passed him quickly in the same direction. He was carrying a small white-paper parcel. This was Risákoff. Immediately after the outriders of the Czar clattered by, followed, at a very short distance, by the Imperial carriage. A loud explosion was then heard, and Gorokoff fell, dazed, but unhurt. When he recovered, two of the Cossack guard, with their horses streaming with blood, were lying motionless on the ground, and Risákoff had been seized by the police. The Czar, apparently unhurt, left his carriage and, much against the advice of his attendants, approached the assassin, who was being roughly treated by an excited crowd pouring down from the Nevski. Having questioned Risákoff, and ordered him to be searched, the Emperor made the sign of the cross, as if in thanksgiving for his escape, and was returning to his carriage, when Elnikoff darted out of the crowd, and moved quickly up

to him, at the same time dashing a bomb to the ground between them. The explosion was terrible. When the thick white smoke had cleared away the Czar and his murderer were seen lying almost side by side—both mortally wounded. "To the Winter Palace—to die," were almost the last words whispered by Alexander II. as he was lifted into his carriage, and driven slowly homeward through the darkening streets, now thronged with pale excited men and terrified women.

At the trial of the prisoners M. Mouravieff, who as Procureur conducted the prosecution, enlarged upon the enormity of their offences, and demanded, in each case, the death penalty. Sophie Perovska, a woman who was young, well educated, and of gentle birth, and yet could deliberately superintend the perpetration of so horrible a crime, he could only describe as a monster.* The court, after a short deliberation,

* It is said that M. Mouravieff was well acquainted with Perovska's family, and had once actually saved her from drowning, when a little girl, in the Lake of Geneva.

found the prisoners guilty on all the counts, and they were sentenced to be hanged.*

The execution took place on a large piece of waste ground near the Tsarskoe Selo railway station, and was witnessed by thousands. As the condemned were driven through the streets they were hooted, yelled at, even spat upon, by excited crowds, who, but for the strong military escort, would have torn them from the tumbrils in which they sat, their backs to the horses and hands tightly bound, while each wore upon the breast a black placard bearing the word "Regicide" in large white letters. All were pale but composed, save Risákoff, who looked half dead with terror. Perovska, attired in the neat black dress she had worn at the trial, looked the least concerned and anxious, and even beat time with her foot to the muffled drums of the soldiers that headed the procession.

Although the drop is not used in Russia, the executions were rapidly and, apparently, pain-

* Hessy Helfmann, being *enceinte*, had her sentence commuted to imprisonment for life in a fortress.

lessly carried out, save in the case of Michailoff, whose rope broke, which circumstance gave rise to many exaggerated reports of the occurrence in the English newspapers. Sophie Perovska, who was hanged last, witnessed this, but her marvellous courage did not even then desert her, for the next minute she mounted the scaffold unassisted. Each male and female prisoner, as the noose was adjusted, kissed the cross, with the exception of this remarkable woman, who died, as she had lived, an atheist. Perovska is said to have been a woman of iron will, utterly devoid of sentiment, with a mind filled with but one fixed purpose—the assassination of Alexander II.

If before this national calamity the Russian police regulations had been stringent, it became absolutely necessary, after the tragic event, to frame them on an even stricter basis. The following document (given me by an officer of police in Petersburg) was published, and shows how closely suspected persons were then watched :—

IMPERIAL POLICE DEPARTMENT.

The following questions to be filled in weekly

1. What is the Christian name, paternal name, and family name of the person under observation ?

2. Where is his (or her) residence ? In what district, street, and house ? What is the number of the room ?

3. Where did you first see him, and under what circumstances ? Has he seen you ?

4. How long has he resided at his present address ? Whence did he come ?

5. Does he live alone, or with some one ? In the latter case, with whom ?

6. Has he any servants ? If so, what are their names ? If not, who looks after his room or rooms ? What things has he in his rooms ? To whom is his dirty linen sent ? State name and residence of his washerwoman ?

7. Does he have his meals at home or elsewhere ? In the latter case, where ?

8. Does he visit any library, and if so, which

one? If possible, state what books he has taken out in the course of the week.

9. At what o'clock does he leave his rooms, and when does he return?

10. How does he spend his time at home?

11. Is he paying attention to any woman? If so, who is she and where does she live? Where do they meet?

12. Who has visited him in the course of the week? At what times? a.m. or p.m.?

13. Has any one (male or female) spent the night in his rooms? If so, what person or persons? Their residence?

14. Has he ever been in a state of intoxication, or in a house of ill-fame?

This document is to be signed by the officer of surveillance, and countersigned by the secret police officer for the district.

A large proportion of the Socialistic party in Russia is composed of students, and disturbances at the universities have been almost periodical of late years. The most enthusiastic

and advanced disciples of Nihilism are, as a rule, very young men and women who abandon home, family, and religion "for the cause;" in other words, who adopt ideas of free love, form a *liaison* and disseminate treason throughout the country with more or less success. Two-thirds are educated and, in some cases, talented men without means, who live upon their richer but less gifted brethren, which circumstance gave rise to Prince Dolgoroukoff's famous *mot:* "There are two kinds of Nihilists in Russia; those who have nothing in their heads, and those who have nothing in their pockets." But Nihilism in Russia exists among all classes, excepting the peasantry, who are, as a rule, extremely loyal. The Czar is their "Batiouchka," or "Little Father." He is infallible. The seeds of revolution fall here upon barren ground. It is only from the upper and middle classes that Socialism gains sympathy and support.

The network of Nihilism is not confined to Russia. New York, Berne, and Geneva are its head-quarters, but the principal secret societies

of St. Petersburg, Kharkoff, and Odessa have branches at Berlin, Paris, Vienna, and London. A striking instance of how widespread the International Socialistic movement has become of late years was brought to my notice in Siberia in 1887,* when a political exile at Irkoutsk (a city on the borders of China) begged me to convey a letter in cypher to an English member of his "society," which held its meetings in a house not a hundred yards from Leicester Square. I need hardly say that the request was refused.

It is usual in England to put down all Nihilists in one category, but there are two widely different sects. The "Terrorists" (who advocate murder) are in a very small minority. They may be likened to the Fenian class, whose ideas of reform are based upon assassination and dynamite. The other class of Nihilists have an object somewhat similar to that of the ultra-English and Irish Radicals. When we hear of a wholesale arrest of Nihilists, every

* See "Pekin to Calais by Land," by H. de Windt. Chapman and Hall.

newspaper in England teems with letters indignantly condemning the action of the Russian Government, the writers sublimely ignoring the fact that the same thing happens almost every day in Ireland. "Autres pays, autres mœurs!" Were such perfect freedom given in Russia to the expression of Socialistic opinions as is done in England, the perfect security and contentment in which the peasantry and uneducated classes of the former country now exist would speedily become a thing of the past.

I have often been asked, in England, what effect all this Socialistic agitation had upon the Czar; whether it is true that he wears a coat of mail, never touches food that has not been previously tasted by an officer of police, nor drives out in St. Petersburg without a strong escort of Cossacks, etc., etc.

The newspapers are chiefly responsible for these, and other, absurd canards. As a matter of fact, the Emperor of Russia leads much the same life as any other European sovereign. Revolutionary conspiracies affect him personally

but little. When he appears in the streets of the capital on ordinary occasions, it is with three or four outriders at most, although a clear way is kept for the Imperial carriage through the more crowded thoroughfares. There may, it is true, be plenty of police about, but they are invisible. On state occasions only is the Emperor escorted by a squadron of cavalry. Every one salutes him, and, on every occasion that I have seen his Majesty, he has appeared perfectly composed and cheerful. The "constant dread of assassination" in which the Czar is popularly supposed to live exists only in the fertile brains of English and American newspaper correspondents.

The Emperor is self-willed, not to say obstinate. Once having made a decision, it is almost impossible to turn him from it. He is fond of art and music. The palace at Gatchina is famed for its Gobelins tapestries, and paintings by the best French and Russian masters, while the institution of Russian grand opera in St. Petersburg and Moscow is due entirely to Alexander III. The

summer months are usually passed at Gatchina, where much greater precautions are taken than in the capital for the safety of the Czar. All access to the avenues and drives which his Majesty takes are shut off and guarded by the military, while the palace and grounds are brilliantly illuminated by electric light from dusk to dawn, summer and winter. The peasantry in the neighbourhood have a saying that "It is never night at Gatchina!"

In habits the Emperor is simple and regular. His mornings, which begin at 6 a.m., are devoted to study, correspondence, and interviews with his ministers. At midday he breakfasts with the Empress and his family. In the afternoon he walks, rides, or drives. Alexander III. is fond of violent exercise. At Gatchina his favourite amusements are felling trees in the summer, in winter, clearing away snow from the ice-hills. At eight o'clock he dines. No Parisian *bourgeois* or British yeoman is fonder of simple domestic life than the Great White Czar.

Time hung heavily on my hands in St.

Petersburg. The heat was intense, and at this time of the year there is absolutely nothing to do. All who can do so leave the city and seek the shady woods, blue waters, and pine-scented breezes of Wiborg or Helsingfors, in Finland, for there is no more disagreeable spot in Europe than the Russian capital in summer. The streets are swept, not watered, with what object I failed to discover, for the air is thick with clouds of dust from morning till night. As for the smells, they remind one of the back streets of a Chinese town. With the thermometer at 90° in the shade, it seems strange at first sight to see people walking about with greatcoats thrown over their shoulder, but a very short residence in Russia will solve the mystery. Changes of temperature are dangerously sudden, and the thermometer, even at midsummer, often falls 30° to 40° in a couple of hours towards sundown. A sharp attack of fever and ague was my penalty for neglecting to wear an overcoat at night. There is apparently a good field for physicians in St. Petersburg, for the city boasts but one English doctor. He

was away during my stay, at his koumiss cure near Orenburg. I consequently was obliged to doctor myself, my faith in Russian doctors being limited.* On attempting to purchase some chlorodyne, however, I found the sale of that drug forbidden, as is that of all patent medicines from abroad; but the chemist thoughtfully suggested a bottle of tar liniment (made in Russia) as a substitute!

In Russia, where, notwithstanding all that we heard in England to the contrary, there is (for those who do not meddle with politics) so much liberty, it seems a pity that such useless and vexatious laws should be permitted to remain in force. Against the Russian "censure" and examination of works previous to their introduction into the country, there is, of course, nothing to be said. The precaution is necessary. Yet, even here, the law is strangely inconsistent, for in Gauthier's bookshop at Moscow, Bellamy's now famous work, "Looking Backward," was exposed

* There is no legal fee for physicians in Russia. A licensed practitioner is bound to accept whatever is given him

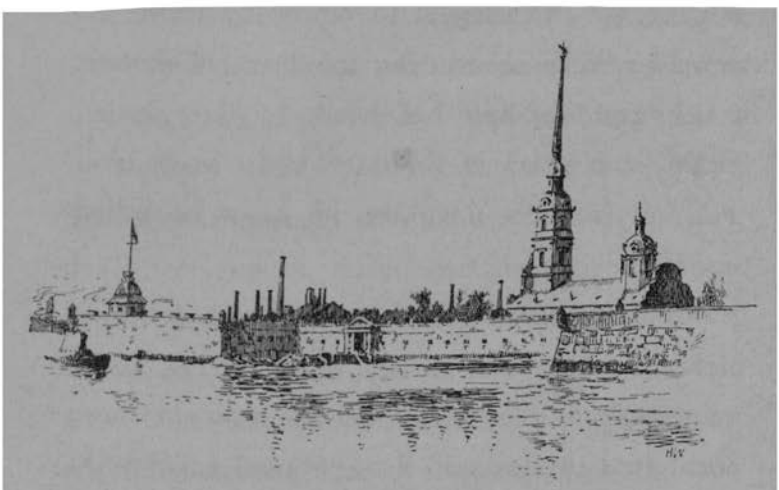
for sale, while Tolstoi's "Kreutzer Sonata," absolutely free of any political matter, was suppressed. The ways of the censure are indeed curious. Madame de Novikoff's "Russia and England" was suppressed for two years for no apparent reason, for the Minister of the Interior, on being informed of the fact, instantly permitted its sale.

Slowly the long sunny days wore away—days passed for the most part in my room at the Hôtel de France, which, looking on to a shady courtyard with a cool plashing fountain, was infinitely preferable to the hot dusty streets. The hotel was almost empty. In the rooms just opposite were located a Russian general (who I verily believe slept in his uniform) and his daughter, a pretty grey-eyed girl of about sixteen. She had but one fault, that of incessantly strumming on a jingling piano, with short intervals for rest, refreshment, and exercise, from morning till night. I am fond of music, but, alas! she knew but one air—an English one, called "Some Day." With this she obliged us two or

three hundred times daily. Practice, it is said, makes perfect, but she never got it quite right. There was always a hitch just before the refrain (I knew so well when it was coming), and a recommencement of the whole thing. I envied the old general, who seemed to enjoy it, sitting at the open window, consuming innumerable glasses of tea, and nodding his head to the music. Perhaps too much of the latter had "made him mad," or, like his daughter, he knew no other tune!

But if the days were long, the cool delicious nights amply made up for them. It is never quite dark at this season of the year in these northern latitudes, and I have read small print in the open street till nearly ten p.m. The principal places of amusement in St. Petersburg are closed during the summer months, but I once made my way to Livadia—some brightly lit gardens, with a large open-air theatre, on the right bank of the Neva. It was a glorious evening. As I crossed the Troitski Bridge there appeared, to the west, a bright glow of rose

colour where the sun had set, against which the spires and buildings of the city stood out, as clear-cut and distinct as a pen-and-ink sketch. Overhead, a tiny star or two glistened in the darkening sky, merging into grey haze and light saffron



FORTRESS OF SS. PETER AND PAUL.

on the horizon, while at my feet the great river flowed placidly on, gleaming like a sheet of burnished steel in the twilight. Suddenly a deep-toned bell from the fortress of SS. Peter and Paul boomed the hour over the water, and simultaneously, a crash of merry music at Livadia,

softened by distance, fell upon the ear. The scene was as striking as it was beautiful.

The Livadia Gardens were crowded, especially in the vicinity of the open-air theatre, where a grand spectacular performance was going on. It was entitled "Stanley," and represented that intrepid explorer penetrating the Dark Continent, accompanied by two ladies, one white and one black, and a comic servant. The amount of gunpowder consumed was enormous, but the orchestra excellent, and when, at the conclusion, a large American banner was displayed to the accompaniment of "Yankee Doodle," the enthusiasm of the audience knew no bounds. Our American cousins are evidently popular in Russia.

Leaving the gardens, a crowd attracted my attention. A drunken man was the cause. A policeman, arriving on the spot, good-humouredly advised him to leave, at the same time taking him lightly by the arm, whereupon the inebriated gentleman struck him full in the face with his open hand. Greatly to my surprise, the blow was not returned, but with the help of two or

three bystanders the man was ejected, put into a droshki, and sent home in charge of a friend. So much for the Russian police. What would have happened in England?

An invitation from a friend in Finland to visit him for a couple of days, at his villa at Wiborg, arrived next day as I was partaking of a lonely *déjeûner* at the Hôtel de France. I use the term advisedly, for a party of forty Cook's excursionists had that morning taken the place by storm, and, seated at a long table in the centre of the room, were discussing plans for the afternoon. The uproar was deafening; all were apparently of different opinions. "I really cannot do the Winter Palace this afternoon," said one poor lady, white and trembling with fatigue. "May I not go for a drive instead?" Then arose an animated discussion. Twenty-three tourists were for driving, seventeen for the palace. How the wretched man in charge of this "party of pleasure" settled it I don't know. He was having a *mauvais quart d'heure* when I left the dining-room!

Having ascertained from M. Kamorski that my papers could not, under any circumstances, be ready for at least four days, I gladly accepted my friend's invitation, and four o'clock the same afternoon found me far from the heat, dust, and smells of St. Petersburg.

CHAPTER III.

FINLAND.

THE Grand Duchy of Finland* is about 700 miles long by 180 miles wide. It has a population of considerably over two millions, Helsingfors, the capital, containing about 60,000 souls. The country has been called, and with reason, the "Land of the Thousand Lakes," for the greater part of the interior consists of water, marsh, and forest, and is as flat as a board, the highest peak south of the Arctic circle being only 650 feet.

Finland has, from time immemorial, been a bone of contention to her neighbours, and, in

* The name "Finland" is derived from a very old word in use among the Lapps: *Finn*, which signifies a witch, or wizard. English merchant sailors often refuse, to this day, to put to sea with a Finn on board.

olden days, innumerable wars were waged between Russia and Sweden for her possession. It was only in 1808 that Russian rule was firmly established, after a desperate resistance by the Swedes and Finns. War was not the only calamity with which the latter had to contend. A terrible famine in 1697 almost depopulated the country, and was followed by another, nearly as disastrous, in 1722.

Notwithstanding the proximity and administration of Russia, Finland presents almost as great a contrast to the latter as France to Germany. The Rajajoki river—which constitutes the frontier or boundary—once crossed, we are in another land. Language, money, houses, stations, carriages, peasantry, all are different, even to the very cap worn by railway officials—a smart gold-laced kepi, infinitely preferable to the hideous flat head-dress with official button, so dear to the heart of every Russian tchinovnik,* from St. Petersburg to the Sea of Okhotzk.

That Finland has preserved her ancient tradi-

* Government official.

tions and customs is not to be wondered at. She has a parliament and currency; she frames her own laws; and, although nominally under the suzerainty of the Czar, enjoys all the privileges of a free and independent state, combined with the advantages arising from the protectorate of one of the first powers in Europe. Finland is visited yearly by about 10,000 ships, bringing rather more than 1,250,000 tons of merchandise, and carrying away about the same. Trade increases yearly. The exports are for the most part forest products, half being of plants, firewood, deals, etc., with three per cent. of tar. Farm produce, butter, cheese, etc., forms an additional fifteen per cent. of the whole, agricultural products three per cent. more, game and fish another three per cent., and various manufactures, iron tissues, and paper, fifteen per cent. more. The goods imported are chiefly fabrics, grain, metals, sugar, cotton, tobacco, salt, wine, oil, and brandy. The imports in 1882 were £6,000,000, the exports about £5,000,000; but these figures have considerably increased during

the last four or five years, and there are now 1000 miles of railway open belonging to the Russian Government.

Wiborg is distant from St. Petersburg about eighty miles, and is situated on the shores of a lovely bay, almost land-locked, off the Gulf of Finland. It is the Russian Brighton, but considerably further away, in point of time, than that health-giving resort from London. The Wiborg express takes five hours to do the distance, a slow train eight. But one does not, in summer, grudge the time, for the line runs through a fertile, picturesque country. The peasantry have a more prosperous, contented look than in Russia, their homesteads and fields are tidier, their cattle sleeker and better cared for. But the country *char-a-banc* which awaits passengers at every station is as terrible an instrument of torture as the Siberian country cart, or teléga, which is saying a good deal.

Occasionally, as we approach Wiborg, wide stretches of sunlit moorland, with pink and white heather growing freely, appear on every side,

relieving the eternal light and dark green of meadow and forest; while here and there, on the horizon, patches of golden corn against blue sky show that harvest time is at hand. At many of the stations, rosy-cheeked, bare-footed children are selling baskets of wild strawberries and crayfish (the latter is almost a national dish in Finland), while some wandering musicians, a fiddle and harp, enliven the proceedings with merry dance music. Not till we move off does the harpist make his collection, standing on the steps of the cars to do so, and leisurely chaffing and joking, as the train proceeds, with the third-class passengers. Many are young women, pretty and fresh complexioned, with china-blue eyes, flaxen hair, and features and expression far more characteristic of Germany or Sweden than the country which governs them.

Towards sunset we reach our destination, an old picturesque town of about fifteen thousand inhabitants, with a ruined citadel marking the spot where, centuries ago, the first settlement was built by the Swedes. What a relief after St. Petersburg!

How clean, white, and cool everything looks after the dusty streets, filthy canals, and tawdry-looking buildings! The sea-breeze blows in strong and refreshing from the Gulf of Finland, as I drive through the wide, deserted-looking thoroughfares to the landing-place. My friend's villa, embowered in pine and fir trees, looks over the blue waters of a sheltered lagoon, separating the strip of land on which it stands from Wiborg; a few minutes more and a sturdy Finlander has ferried across to where a hearty welcome awaits me on the creeper-covered verandah, fragrant with the scent of heliotrope, roses, and narcissus growing in sweet confusion.

Glorious weather, a ramble round the old town, and a sail in the breezy bay in my host's yacht, made the next day seem all too short, for a telegram received that morning, announcing the arrival at my hotel of the necessary papers for Siberia, made an immediate return to the capital imperative. No train, however, was available till early next morning, which circumstance enabled me to accompany my friends to a Finnish "At

home," given by some neighbours on an adjoining lake, on the occasion of their golden wedding.

A ball in Finland is a serious business. It meant, in our case, being ready (dress clothes) at 5 p.m., to embark at Wiborg an hour later on a special steamer for the scene of the revels, about eight miles distant. The saloon and deck of the little boat were already crowded with guests when we arrived; the women well but quietly dressed, the men, some in evening clothes, but the majority in more fanciful garments, in which lavender-coloured trousers and light-blue or green neckties predominated. But all, old and young, were gay, good-humoured, and scrupulously polite. There are few countries in Europe where an Englishman meets with more sympathy and attention than Finland.

Shortly after leaving Wiborg we enter the lovely lake on which our host's villa is situated, an inland sea surrounded on all sides by low hills, densely covered with pine, larch, and fir trees. Here and there, approached by tiny landing-

places, are white villas, dotted promiscuously about as though, like stones, they had been thrown by some giant hand haphazard into the masses of dark green forest. One of them, "Mon Plaisir," was built at enormous expense, and is a marvel of richness and taste. As I lean over the side, watching the lovely scenery, a fellow-guest approaches and informs me that this is a favourite locality for sportsmen as well as lovers of nature. Game of all kinds abounds, and, not thirty miles distant, there is the finest salmon fishing in the world. It is strange that this is not more widely known, but, say the Russians (and with reason), "We do not wish it to be!"

In the course of a conversation that followed my informant gave me a considerable amount of interesting information. Although a Finn, he expressed no animosity towards the country that had annexed his own, but, on the contrary, held that nothing but good could come of such powerful protection. During the evening, however, I never once heard the name of Russia pronounced without aversion. Even in Helsingfors, Russians

are rigidly excluded from all entertainments given by Finns; nor do the Russian soldiers mix, in any way, with the Finnish troops.

"You should visit the prisons of Finland," said my new acquaintance on hearing the object of my journey to Siberia. "I am ashamed to own it, but they are much worse than any to be found in Russia."

Of this fact I was already aware. It is indeed to be regretted that the prison administration of St. Petersburg has little or no jurisdiction in Finland. Insufficient food, damp, underground cells, irons ten times the weight of those used in Siberia, are the smallest evils endured by the prisoners. I remember while crossing the latter country, in 1887, making the acquaintance of a former bank clerk, a native of Helsingfors, who had in 1870 been sentenced to five years' imprisonment for theft. Rather than endure the penalty in his own country, however, he had petitioned the Czar to have it commuted to penal servitude *for life* in Siberia, a request acceded to by allowing him to complete his sentence (of

five years only) in a Siberian prison. He was, when I met him, at Tomsk, making a fair income book-keeping for a Russian merchant. Petitions of this kind became so frequent some years ago, that it was found necessary to form Finnish settlements in Siberia. There are two near Omsk: Ruschkova and Jelanka, each with six to seven hundred inhabitants. Here no Russian is spoken, and the exiles are allowed their own pastor, who is paid an annual stipend of about £200 by the Finnish Government.

Our host and hostess, surrounded by a group of friends and relations, received us on the landing-stage; Mr. W——, a tall, soldier-like man, with iron-grey hair and moustache, and his wife, a short stout lady, some years younger, whom her good-looking husband had somewhat distanced in the race of time. The house was ablaze with candles and coloured lamps. Adjoining it was a wooden ballroom, with polished floor as slippery as glass, specially built for the occasion. The travellers having partaken of tea and coffee, the ball commenced (at 8.30), and it was not till

nearly 3 a.m., that the final schottische was danced. The Finns do things well; the music was good, the supper excellent, and last, but not least, the women good looking. Surrounded by the latter with their pretty features and bright clear complexions, one might almost have imagined one's self at some yeoman's dance in the West of England, save that these northern maidens moved through the mazes of the mazurka (so different to ours) with the grace and stateliness of a duchess, and their partners, even towards the small hours, showed no signs of having partaken imprudently of the cunning iced drinks provided by our host. "I hope you have enjoyed yourself, sir," said the latter, after a *tête-à-tête* cigar, as he pledged me, before parting, in a bumper of champagne; "for I like all your countrymen. Here is a proof: I buy my wine and cigars in London, and have my clothes made by Poole." There is no earthly reason why a Finn should *not* have his clothes made by the King of Tailors, yet the combination seemed somehow strangely out of place.

Never shall I forget the exquisite beauty of that homeward journey, under a sky white with stars, gliding swiftly through the still, placid water, studded with the reflection of a myriad glittering worlds. Now and again the red or green lights of a steamer flitted like glow-worms over the surface of the lake, across which the moon, slowly nearing the horizon, threw a broad streak of silver, while from the low, dark shore gleamed at intervals the brilliant windows of a villa or dull yellow glimmer of a cottage casement. It was like a scene from fairyland, the starlit silence only interrupted, ever and anon, by the shrill scream of the whistle as we neared the various landing-places, to which the captain did not even take the trouble to make fast—indeed, there was no one ashore to throw a hawser. "Ease her!" "Stop her!" "Back her!" and our fellow-guests scramble to *terra firma* as best they can. Then, grouped together on the little wooden jetty, they serenade us with the weird, touching partsongs of their country, as we put off, and proceed on our journey. I can

hear them now, those wild pathetic airs borne over the water from out the dark, silent pine forest. Finnish music, like Russian, is intensely melancholy, most of the national melodies being in the minor key, wailing and continuous, with no time or rhythm, like those of the Tziganes.

Day is breaking as we near the towering citadel, white houses, and shipping of Wiborg, wreathed in the grey mist of morning. Bidding adieu to my kind hosts, I make my way to the railway station, for there is no time for bed. By midday I am in St. Petersburg. On my table lies a large official envelope. Breaking the seal, I read, in Russian, as follows :—

"Ministry of the Interior, Prison Department,
"St. Petersburg.

"This document is held by an Englishman, Harry de Windt. It authorizes him (by special permission of the Minister of the Interior) to visit and closely inspect (at his own time and convenience, by night or day) the forwarding prisons and common gaols of the following

cities: Tomsk, Tobolsk, and Tiumen, in Siberia; —also the transportation barges on the Volga and Obi rivers.

Seal

"Signed, for the Ministry of the Interior, by the Sub-Director and Inspector of Siberian Prisons,

"D. KAMORSKI.

"July 20th, O.S., 1891."

The same evening I left for Siberia.

CHAPTER IV.

MOSCOW.

I DESPATCHED, before leaving St. Petersburg, a note to M. Kamorski, with an itinerary of my proposed route. This was done, I may add, for the express purpose of misleading the inspector as to the date of my arrival at Tomsk. The latter city was (according to the itinerary) to be reached on the 25th of September. But the actual date of my visit was, as the reader will see, nearly a month earlier, and, consequently, when entirely unexpected. I can, therefore, safely assert that the Great Forwarding Prison in Moscow was the only establishment where the officials "knew I was coming." This was, however, unavoidable, for I remained but three days in the "Holy City," and the day of my departure

from St. Petersburg was well known to the Prison Administration.

Moscow must be seen. It cannot be described. The most graphic pen would fail to portray, with justice, this quaint, characteristic city, next to Constantinople the most picturesque and beautiful in Europe. The contrast with St. Petersburg is striking, and anything but favourable to the latter, with its ramshackle buildings, dusty streets, and fever-spreading canals. The capital of Russia is a bad imitation of Paris and Berlin. There is but one Moscow.

The Kremlin * is, at first sight, disappointing. It takes two days at least to thoroughly realize its beauty and grandeur: the palace, with its "Tresor" of fabulous worth; the golden throne encrusted with two thousand precious stones; the crown of the Empress Ann Ivanovna, formed of two thousand five hundred diamonds, and surmounted by a huge ruby, valued alone at sixty thousand roubles. And then the dim, dark churches; the priceless tapestries, rotting with

* Derived from the Tartar word *kreml*, a fortress.

age and incense; the massive gold ikons, plastered with jewels till the painted figures are almost invisible; the Cathedral of the "Assumption," where the Czars are crowned; "St. Michael's," where they were formerly interred; and the "Annunciation," with its silver cupolas, and floors of agate and jasper, where they are wed and baptized. But a detailed account of these would fill volumes.

Taking as base the river Moskva, which flows past its time-worn battlements, the walls of the Kremlin are nearly triangular, and form an enclosure about two miles in circumference. There are five gates, the principal being the "Spaski," or "Gate of the Redeemer." Over this is a gold ikon, representing the Saviour of Smolensk, and held in such veneration that every one passing through the arch must uncover. An armed sentry stands at each end to enforce this order. It is said that Napoleon I., when riding through, refused to remove his hat, but that a sudden gust of wind blew it off, much to the delight of the inhabitants

and discomfiture of *le Petit Caporal!* Near the arsenal are ranged, tier upon tier, the 360 cannon taken from the French during the ill-fated campaign of 1812. All are embossed with the Imperial eagle and crown, and, like ships, bear names on the breech—"Formidable," "Immortalité," "Sans Peur," etc. Next these are 189 Austrian and 123 Prussian guns, taken at the same time.

It is from the belfry of Ivan Veliki, which towers nearly three hundred feet above the Kremlin, that the finest view of Moscow is obtained. This building, which dates from the sixteenth century, contains no less than thirty-four bells, the largest being more than sixty tons in weight. Among the smaller are several cast in pure silver, with the clear musical tone rarely heard out of Russia. No bells in the world can compare with those of Moscow. Mention is made of them in the earliest manuscripts, the Russians being supposed to have learnt the art of casting them from the Scythians. The famous "Great Bell of Moscow," now cracked and

useless, stands at the foot of Ivan Veliki. It weighs two hundred tons, and was cast in the reign of the Empress Anne, but was never a success from a practical point of view. Its enormous weight was the cause of its fall and destruction. It is said that the flaw in the metal was caused by precious stones in the jewellery cast into the melting-pot by the smart ladies of those days. An idea of the size of this bell may be gained from the fact that it would easily accommodate a dinner-party of fifteen to twenty persons. The broken piece alone is seven feet high and weighs eleven tons!

I doubt if there is a more picturesque *coup d'œil* in the world than that from the belfry of Ivan Veliki towards sunset. At our feet, Moscow—a confused mass of white buildings, red roofs, and green gardens, with its six hundred churches, their star-spangled domes and gold crosses flashing in the sun, an ideal "Holy City!" Immediately below, the river Moskva, which, spanned by innumerable stone bridges, meanders sluggishly through the crowded streets, and out

into the broad green plains, where, diminished to a thin silver thread, it is lost in blue haze on the horizon. Far, far away, almost hidden by the mists of evening, the Sparrow Hills, the scene of Napoleon's short-lived triumph, from which the wearied legions first sighted the promised land, and the cry arose, as of one man, from thousands of French battalions, "Moscou!"

It is cool, pleasant, and still up here; for the dust is far below, the roar of traffic softened by distance. Only the buzz of insects, the cooing of pigeons is heard as the sacred* birds circle around the golden cupolas, their white wings gleaming brightly against the deepening blue. Here and there, at long intervals of distance, a crimson light shines out of the soft grey mass of twilit masonry below—some window-pane caught and reddened by the setting sun, now fast disappearing below the dull drab horizon. Then, suddenly and simultaneously, a thousand bells peal out upon the evening air: some loud and

* The pigeon in Russia, being symbolical of the Holy Spirit, is never killed.

clashing; others deep and sonorous; others, again, tiny tinkling bells of pure silver. In modulated waves of sound the glorious "carillon" rises, wafting one grand, but indefinable, melody over the darkening city. Then, reluctantly, we descend, for in another half-hour the gates of the Kremlin will be closed. A sunset such as this is never forgotten.

Modern Moscow is clean, well paved, and well lit. It has a brighter, more cheerful look than the capital, arising perhaps from the fact that it is built on undulating ground, and not on a dead-level swamp, like St. Petersburg. Most of the principal streets terminate in a large square, one side of which is occupied by the huge "Bolshoi Theater," or Grand Opera House. The public gardens are green and fresh, the streets well kept, the shops equal to those of any European capital. But the drainage is defective, and the smells, in summer, even worse than in St. Petersburg. Here, however, there is some excuse. The little Moskva, though blue and picturesque when viewed from the tower of Ivan

Veliki, is in reality little more than a dirty ditch of nearly stagnant water, utterly incapable of draining a city a quarter the size of Moscow.

The Pont des Marechaux is the Bond Street of Moscow. It is the fashionable promenade on fine afternoons, for at Moscow it is not considered *infra dig.* to walk as at St. Petersburg. Running out of this street are a couple of "Passages," recently built—lofty galleries, with glass roofs and marble pavements. Here are the best and most expensive shops: jewellery, furs, perfumery, and bonbons for the most part. There is no confusion, no incongruity, here as at St. Petersburg, where a jeweller's shop, sparkling with gold and precious stones, is often seen next door to a dirty little fly-blown window, disclosing a few boxes of cheap cigarettes, packets of tea, and perhaps half a dozen vodka bottles, blown into rough shapes, representing the Czar, Bismarck, or the Eiffel Tower. The "West End" of Moscow is as clearly defined as that of London.

The Pont des Maréchaux is an amusing sight, even on a summer's afternoon. The best

people are, of course, "out of town;" but the broad steep street and "Passages" are generally crowded, on a fine day, with officers, tchinovniks,* the bourgeoisie, male and female, and nurses and children, mixed with a sprinkling of English and American tourists and Parisian *cocottes.* The women are, as a rule, plain, and dressed in the most *outré* French fashion; the men (though the thermometer be over ninety degrees in the shade) all in greatcoats, and all, to a man, smoking. If the track of the English to India be marked by empty beer-bottles, cigarette ends must assuredly indicate the Russian advance into Central Asia!

A striking and handsome dress is that of the Russian *nourrice* in her Sunday clothes. The kakoshnik, a ruby or turquoise velvet tiara, forms the head-dress; while the hair is dressed in long plaits—two for a married, one for an unmarried woman. Over a chemise of thin damask is a body and skirt of light-blue satin, made very high in the waist, and covering another

* Government officials.

petticoat of less rich material embroidered in gold. The dress, on a pretty woman, should be extremely becoming; but I had no opportunity of judging, for, among the lower orders in Russia, pretty women are extremely rare. Their charges, on the other hand, were usually beautiful children, with the violet eyes, sweeping lashes, and sweet, but sad, expression rarely seen out of Russia.

The "Slavianski Bazaar," near the Kremlin, is the best hotel in Moscow—I was going to say in Europe, for neither London nor Paris can boast a more luxurious establishment; and, if the prices are those of "Claridge's" or the "Hôtel Bristol," the rooms are palatial and the cuisine unsurpassed, no mean advantages to the stranger in a distant land. In the centre of the great marble restaurant is a fountain, wherein, lazily disporting themselves among cool green leaves, are sterlet brought fresh from the Volga every morning. A net is handed you; you pick out your fish, land him, and ten minutes later he lies before you *à la Tartare*, plain, boiled, or fried, as the case may be. It is an expensive luxury, but almost

worth the money. Fresh from the water, no fish can touch the sterlet for delicacy and flavour. It is almost worth the journey to Russia, too, to taste real fresh caviare; as unlike the salt potted abomination sold in England as can well be.*

A good cigar is a desirable sequel to a good dinner, but the former are not to be had in Russia. Ask for one at any first-class shop or restaurant and it is brought you in a tiny wooden box, the glass lid of which discloses a pale, musty, flavourless weed, exorbitantly dear, and of which cabbage forms the most harmless component. Cigarettes, on the other hand, are cheap and excellent. The best are only three to five roubles a hundred, and are far superior, both in purity and flavour, to those sold in England as Egyptian or Turkish at four times the price.

The second day of my stay here was devoted to an inspection of the Great Forwarding or

* Caviare obtained from the roe of the sterlet is much more delicate than that from the sturgeon. Some of the latter weigh as much as three thousand pounds, measure from eighteen to twenty-seven feet in length, and yield a roe weighing eight hundred pounds.

Exile Prison. With the exception of convicts sent direct by sea, from Odessa to the island of Sakhalin, Moscow is the starting-point for political and criminal offenders from all parts of Russia, sentenced to Siberia. I was anxious to commence my investigations in the Peresilni, or Great Forwarding Prison of Moscow, as it forms the rendezvous whence, in summer, gangs of about seven hundred exiles each are despatched two or three times a week by rail to Nijni-Novgorod. Here they are embarked upon prison barges and towed by steamer to Perm. From Perm, well-appointed and specially built railway cars convey them across the Ourals (mountains only in name) to Tiumen, and from Tiumen a river journey of about nine days (upon similar barges to those afore mentioned) lands them at Tomsk. At Tomsk the march (for those sentenced to more remote districts) commences. Many, however, convicted of minor offences, are landed at Tobolsk, Sourgout, or other settlements far nearer Europe.

The Peresilni or Forwarding Prison, is situ-

ated in one of the poorer quarters of Moscow, in a dreary-looking suburb of dirty narrow streets and squalid houses. It is a large brick building, almost hidden by massive stone walls—at the four corners of which are four three-storied towers with large but closely barred windows, looking on to the road. Outside each stands an armed sentry, who peers suspiciously out of his black-and-white box as we pass; for it is in these towers, away from the main building, that political prisoners are confined. A glance at our pass, however, restores confidence and we approach the main entrance. The first object to attract attention is a photographic *atelier*, its glass roof projecting from a buttress to the left of the gateway.* In answer to a loud peal the heavy iron-bound gates are swung back, and, as we enter, close with a crash behind us.

Some moments elapse ere I can distinguish the surroundings. Entering suddenly, the bright glare outside has turned obscurity into pitch

* Every convict is now photographed before starting for Siberia.

darkness, and I sit blinking like an owl, while my guide goes in quest of a prison official. It grows clearer, and I presently distinguish a lofty, stone-flagged, windowless corridor, its vaulted roof supported by massive pillars. To my right a large ikon, dimly lit by a flickering taper, and near it a small doorway leading to the offices, the governor's apartments, and the prison. A warder, seated on a bench, stares at me in stolid silence, broken only by a confused distant sound, a hum of human voices and faint clank of chains. The place is cool, pleasant, and absolutely free from smell. Presently a young man, in shabby dark green uniform* with orange piping, advances with a swagger, swinging a huge bunch of keys, and inquires, somewhat rudely, what my business is. But the magic pass has a wonderful effect upon his manners, and, politely offering me a cigarette, he murmurs an excuse, and we start on our tour of inspection, preceded by two warders.

The prison is three storied. We ascend a flight of steep stone steps to the first landing.

* Russian police official uniform.

On either side are visible, through iron grilles, broad brick-paved corridors with, on the one hand, kameras, or public cells, on the other large barred windows thrown wide open during the day, to admit light and air. Although each kamera boasts at least three large windows (also wide open), the doors themselves are of open ironwork, to increase the perpetual current of pure air at night. In the day time they are unlocked, and the prisoners permitted to stroll freely about the corridors, if so minded.

We are at the height of the transportation season, and the prison is, my guide informs me, unusually crowded. But although I minutely inspect every kamera (on each story), visit in detail every nook and corner of the Moscow Peresilni, I cannot once detect an offensive odour. The predominating one is that of tobacco, for though smoking is nominally forbidden, it is winked at by the authorities and warders, more, perhaps, on account of its disinfecting qualities than anything else.

The kameras (of which there are over

twenty) are large whitewashed rooms, about twelve feet high, and sixty feet long by twenty broad. (I may here mention that the most crowded kamera I saw at Moscow was of these dimensions, and contained a hundred and two men.) A huge stove, built into the wall, occupies one corner, while down the centre runs a broad wooden platform, sloping down both ways from the centre. On this the prisoners sleep, head to head, each man being provided with blanket, mattress, and pillow. Round the walls are narrower platforms for resting during the day, and above them shelves for clothing, provisions, books, etc.

The Moscow Forwarding Prison is, as I have said, the great rendezvous for prisoners from all parts of Russia condemned to Siberia. The varied types and nationalities within its walls would furnish material for an ethnological work of many volumes. Great and little Russians, Poles, Finns, Crim-Tartars, Georgians, Circassians, and many more. All are clad in the linen shirt and trousers, flat cap, and long grey frieze

overcoat that constitute the Siberian convict's summer wear, and, as we entered a cell, stood to attention, and with a simultaneous shout, that rang through the building, wished us "Good day." Of the eight or nine hundred I saw, about a third had half-shaven heads, the distinguishing mark of those who have forfeited all civil rights, but twenty or thirty, at the most, wore chains or leg-irons. The latter are padded with leather to avoid injury to the skin, and worn *outside* the trousers. They are of the same pattern throughout Russia and Siberia.*

I was fortunate enough to visit this prison at the dinner hour; I say fortunate enough, for the savoury smell that arose from the kitchens, with their tesselated marble floors, huge ovens, and bright copper caldrons bubbling over with thick, rich soup, did more to break down preconceived notions as to the bad fare supplied to Siberian exiles than tons of official statistics. Here is the diet scale of the Moscow Peresilni. I should

* A pair of these (from Tomsk) are now in my possession. They weigh under six English pounds.

mention that at the mines and penal settlements this allowance is increased in proportion to the work done:—

DIET SCALE OF PERESILNI PRISON, MOSCOW.*

Sunday.

DINNER.

	English ounces.
Vermicelli	4
Meat	5
Gruel of pearl barley	1
Salt	½

GRUEL.

Gruel of buckwheat	4
Dripping	½
Salt	½

SUPPER.

Gruel of buckwheat	4
Dripping	1
Salt	½
Rye bread	2 lbs.

Monday.

DINNER.

Shtchi (cabbage soup)	5
Meat	4
Gruel of barley	1
Flour	½
Salt	½
Pepper	½
Onions	1

* See Appendix G.

GRUEL.

	English ounces.
Gruel of millet	5
Dripping	1
Salt	¼

SUPPER.

Gruel of millet	4
Dripping	½
Salt	¼
Rye bread	1 lb.

Wednesday.

DINNER.

Pea soup	5
Flour	1
Salt	½
Onions	½

GRUEL.

Gruel of millet	5
Dripping	1
Salt	½

SUPPER.

Gruel of millet	4
Dripping	1
Salt	¼
Rye bread	1 lb.

Tuesday and Saturday.

Same as Monday.

Thursday.

Same as Monday, but barley gruel instead of millet gruel for supper.

Friday.

Same as Wednesday, but buckwheat gruel instead of millet gruel.

In addition to the above allowance, which applies only to ordinary criminals, and not to the privileged classes, who receive far more, prisoners are allowed kvas, or spruce beer, twice a week.

As I have said, political prisoners are not confined in the main building of the Moscow Peresilni, but in the stone towers already mentioned. Each cell contains three beds, a table, chairs, and carpet. The washing and sanitary arrangements are perfect; the general impression, that of cleanliness and light. In one of the rooms a young man is seated at table, discussing a beefsteak, *pommes frites*, and a bottle of wine. "They can procure anything from outside," says my guide, "provided they can pay for it. Only alcohol is limited in quantity.—

You will not get such good fare at Tobolsk," he adds, addressing the young "political." "Ma foi, non," is the reply, with a smile and a shrug of the shoulders. "Que voulez-vous? It's only for six months."

M. Felix Volkovsky, who in 1890 escaped from Siberia to England, has described the cell he occupied in one of these towers in a recent number of the *Fortnightly Review*. He says: "My cell was lit by one small window about two feet square and more than seven feet from the ground. The window itself seemed never to have been washed, and it was protected in the following fashion:—On the inside were large wooden bars, then came thick iron bars and cross bars, while outside the window was a wire screen. It can be imagined that, under these conditions, very little light struggled into my cell. . . . For more than eighteen hours of each day, then, I was in total darkness."

Things have evidently changed since M. Volkovsky's incarceration, for I visit each of the four towers and every cell they contain. The

latter, which measure thirty feet long by fifteen feet broad, have each a large window about four feet from the ground, barred certainly, but made to open and freely admit light and air.

The women's wards in this prison are precisely similar to those of the men. Female criminals destined for Siberia wear a rough grey dress and a white linen head-dress, not unbecoming to a pretty face and figure. Two of the larger kameras were occupied by the wives and families of convicts in ordinary dress, voluntarily accompanying their husbands into exile. I gather from my guide that among the lower orders this is done, as a rule, more from custom than affection. A wife who forsakes her husband on his transportation, and remains in Europe, is generally suspected of ulterior motives, especially as, under certain circumstances, she is entitled to re-marry.

The following table (for the authenticity of which I can vouch) is a proof that neither trouble nor expense have, within the past five years, been spared to ensure a competent medical staff

and perfect sanitary arrangements. The reader must not forget, however, that this is a "moving" population.

PERESILNI PRISON, MOSCOW.

	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.
Number of prisoners	39,144	37,164	36,081	37,054
Deaths	253	277	206	454

There is probably no nation in Europe where prisoners (both political and criminal) excite so much commiseration as in Russia. The "Société de Bienfaisance" is, in the latter country, a similar institution to our "Prisoners' Aid Society;" but this is not the only quarter from which convicts can rely upon charity and assistance. Money, white bread, eggs, milk, and other delicacies arrive every morning at the gates of the Forwarding Prison, sent by private individuals, and are taken in and divided among the nestchastni, or "unfortunates," as they are called. For the last four or five years a leading merchant of Moscow has presented each exile with a rouble on his departure from Moscow. Even in Siberia the

peasantry do their best to lighten the journey of the weary pilgrim on the great post road that leads to the Pacific. Enter a village after sunset and you will see on every doorstep a bowl of milk and wedge of black bread. They are placed there for the brodyag, or escaped convict, who dare not by day emerge from the dark, pathless wood, but who is, at night at any rate, free from molestation and sure of a meal.

One should not leave Moscow without a dinner at the "Hermitage," followed by a drive out to Strelna and the gypsies. A Russian will tell you that the former restaurant cannot be surpassed, even in Paris, for its splendour and *cuisine*. The plate, linen, and china are said to have cost fabulous sums; the wines to be unequalled even in the Imperial cellars. It was, therefore, somewhat disappointing to find a very ordinary establishment, which would, in Paris or London, be called second-class. But the food, cooking, and wine were good and moderate enough in price, although digestion was not improved by the discordant wheezing of a large mechanical

barrel-organ, one of those instruments so popular in Russia, and to be found in most restaurants in the larger cities. Although Russians are essentially a musical race, one rarely hears good music out of the opera houses. Their military bands, with the exception of the guard regiments, are excruciating.

The far-famed "Tsiganes" of Strelna were also a distinct failure, though the drive out in the cool night air was pleasant enough, and the view of the distant city, with its white buildings and golden domes and crosses flashing in the moonbeams, enchanting. A Russian friend at St. Petersburg had given me glowing accounts of the beauty of the gypsy women, but I found them, with few exceptions, ugly and ungraceful. It is considered "the thing" by the *jeunesse dorée* of Moscow to hire these harridans at fabulous sums to sing at dinner or supper parties, but the entertainment, judging from Strelna, must be very dull and uninteresting. The music consisted solely of a couple of guitars and a tambourine played by swarthy, beetle-browed ruffians

in rusty black velvet and red flannel shirts, while the dancing of the women more resembled the *danse du ventre* of the "Rue du Caire" than anything else. Indecency seemed to be the sole object aimed at, and with tolerable success.

On the 15th of August, N.S., I left for Perm *viâ* Nijni-Novgorod.

CHAPTER V.

NIJNI-NOVGOROD—THE VOLGA—PERM.

RUSSIANS have a mania for night travelling. The mail leaves Moscow at 9 p.m. for Nijni-Novgorod, but there are no available trains in the daytime. This would, in some cases, be a serious drawback; but the line to the Volga runs through flat, monotonous steppe-land, and the traveller misses little in point of scenery or objects of interest.

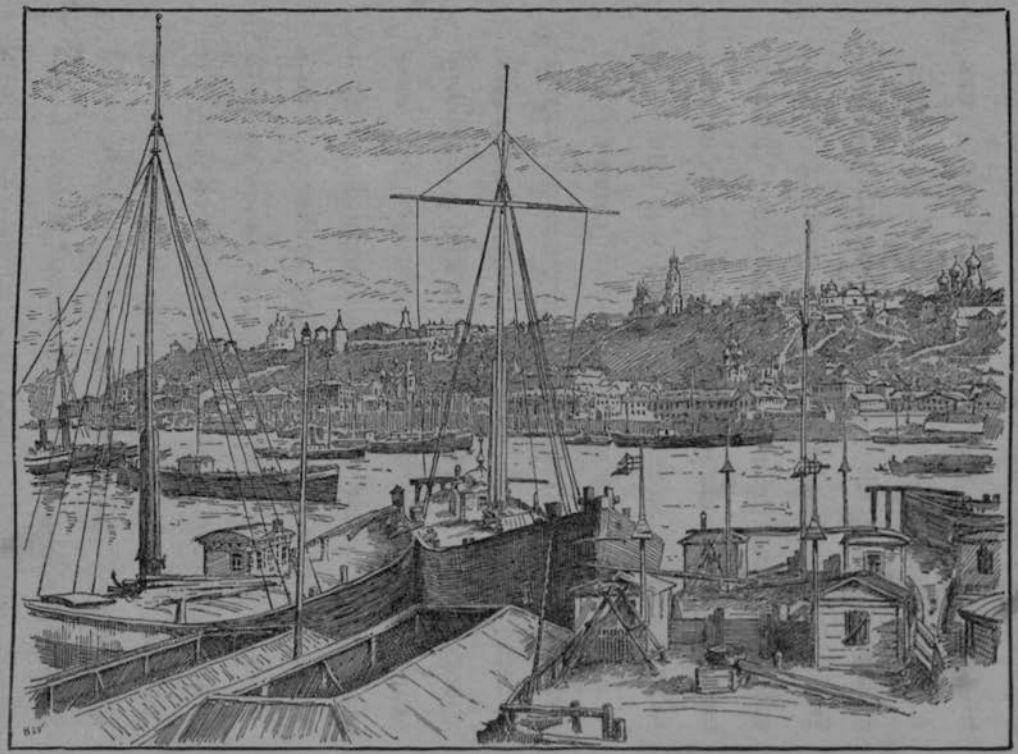
The railway station was crowded. It is a custom amongst the Russian *bourgeoisie* to witness the arrival and departure of mail trains. Even at small intermediate stations, *buffet* and platform are thronged till a late hour on fine summer nights with well-dressed men and women who have come there with no special object but to look at and criticize the passengers, on the

off chance of meeting a friend or acquaintance. To-night, though rain is pouring in torrents, I can scarcely get through the crowd to my carriage. The Czar's subjects have a supreme contempt for rain—witness their public vehicles—but the Moscow droshkis are, unlike those of St. Petersburg, fitted with a hood, which saves me a night of discomfort in wet clothes.

It is about two hundred and seventy-five miles from the "Holy City" to Nijni-Novgorod. The latter presented a curious appearance next morning, for the great annual fair had already commenced, and the varied nationalities and strange costumes on every side reminded one more of the alleys of an Asiatic bazaar, than the streets of a Russian town. Central Asians, Persians, Circassians, Tartars, Turks, Parsees, even Chinamen, jostled and pushed in all directions, almost barring the way, though the thoroughfares are wide as those of an Australian settlement. The *coup d'œil*, set off by a cloudless blue sky and dazzling sunshine, was picturesque and unique, but the sweltering heat and clouds of dust were

almost unbearable. No bad smells were, however, noticeable. London itself is not more carefully or thoroughly drained than Nijni at this season. A proof of this lies in the absence of any serious epidemic during the past few years, although it is estimated that no less than half a million strangers annually attend the fair, and the latter is held during the months of July and August, when the heat is little short of tropical.

Nijni-Novgorod is unquestionably (after Moscow and Odessa) the most picturesque city in Russia, always excepting the Crimea, that beauty spot of the Black Sea, which, from a scenery point of view, is, in my humble opinion, *hors concours* with the rest of the Czar's dominions. Built at the confluence of two rivers, Nijni-Novgorod consists of an upper and a lower town, while joined to the latter by a bridge of boats is the low spit of land washed by the waters of the Volga and Oka, where the great market is held. It is from here that the finest view of the old city is obtainable. The towering Kremlin, five hundred years old, with its massive walls and



NIJNI-NOVGOROD.

towers; the palace of the governor with its terraces, gardens, and smooth shaven lawns; hard by, the white walls and golden domes of the cathedral, almost hidden by masses of dark green foliage; and, at the foot of the rock, six hundred feet below, the river, its broad bosom alive with movement and craft of every imaginable description, from the clumsy grimy barge just arrived with tea or furs from Siberia, to the trim white Yankee-built passenger steamer, all bunting and brasswork, under way for the Caspian. Though the stream is quite a quarter of a mile across, there is barely two hundred yards' clear waterway. How this forest of masts will ever disentangle itself is the question uppermost in my mind, as my isvostchik, with difficulty, pilots me over the wooden bridge and lands me with a jerk on the jetty, alongside which lies the *Alexis*, my home for the next thousand miles, from Nijni-Novgorod to Perm.

While seeing my luggage on board, I unconsciously light a cigarette which is violently and indignantly dashed out of my mouth and into

the water by a policeman. Smoking is, it appears, strictly forbidden on the wharves or in the streets during fair time. An infringement of this rule a few weeks later led to the attempted assassination of General Baránoff, Governor of Nijni-Novgorod, by a young man whom he had ordered to be punished for the offence.*

The fair of Nijni-Novgorod dates from the fourteenth century, when a number of merchants annually assembled for purposes of trade, but it only attained its present size and importance within the last hundred years. Although steam and deterioration of the overland tea-trade have robbed it of much of its former glory, the total value of merchandise brought to the fair in 1889 was estimated at nearly £20,000,000 sterling, nearly all of which was sold. Everything imaginable is disposed of *en gros et en détail*—textiles, grains, metals, drugs, precious stones, live stock, hardware, skins, furs, *articles de Paris*, and Manchester goods. Over eighty per

* I should mention that the offender refused three times to comply with the order, and resisted the police.

cent., however, of the wares are Russian, fifteen per cent. Asiatic, and only four per cent. foreign and colonial.

The traveller to Siberia has plenty of choice as regards steamship accommodation on the Volga, for there are daily departures from Perm throughout the summer season. The *Alexis*, however, was a miserable little tub, dirty, crowded, and barely a quarter the size of the fast, luxurious vessel that brought me from Perm in 1887.* "No water in the Upper Kama," says the captain laconically, when I inquire the reason for the change. "Big boats cannot run. I doubt if *we* get to Perm in under a week." This was pleasant news, especially as there is but a weekly boat service between Tiumen and Tomsk, and I had but three days to spare for the overland journey across the Ourals. Had I known but a quarter of the difficulties in store for me before reaching the Irtysh river I might have felt even more dispirited. Ignorance was, in this case, decidedly bliss.

* See "From Pekin to Calais by Land."

It is past midday before the last whistle sounds and, with much splashing and puffing, the grimy little craft forges slowly into midstream. On deck there is absolutely no standing room, while only a salamander could endure the first-class saloon, or deck house, in which every one is either eating or smoking, every window is tightly closed, and upon the thin metal roof of which the sun has, for the last four hours, been fiercely beating. Once in the Volga, however, a breeze springs up; and, seeing that my fellow-passengers have deserted the cabin, I venture to enter and inspect, through an atmosphere you could cut with a knife, the first-class accommodation of the *Alexis*. This does not take long. It consists solely of hard narrow couches, covered with threadbare, greasy red velvet, ranged round the aforesaid saloon, about eighteen feet long by fourteen broad. A deal table, covered with a dirty white cloth, plates, and glasses, occupies the centre, while cigarette ends, ashes, bread-crumbs, and scraps of food strew the oil-cloth floor. But the *cuisine* is, to my surprise, clean and excellent,

and a delicious sterlet, some stewed pears, and a bottle of Crimean wine soon put things in a rosier light.

My companions were, I was glad to find, not numerous. They consisted of a fat, good-humoured old "pope," or priest, his little niece, accompanied by a pretty blue-eyed nurse from Southern Russia, and a couple of tchinovniks, or Government officials. The latter is a wide term in Russia and Siberia. It may mean anything from the governor of a province to a seller of postage stamps, and as there is no distinctive dress, and all are entitled to wear the hideous peaked cap and Government button, mentioned in a previous chapter, it is sometimes confusing. One of the tchinovniks aforesaid, a little wizened hunchback, understood a few words of English—a fact I had reason to deplore before reaching Perm; for, with a view to improving his knowledge of the language, he persistently pursued me from morning to night with a dialogue book. But they were pleasant, amiable fellows, especially the priest, a clever, genial old gentleman, with

whom I had many a long and interesting discussion (chiefly, I regret to say, towards the small hours) on the future policy of England as regards Russian designs upon India.

How glorious was that first evening on the Volga! How refreshing the cool night breeze, laden with the scent of pines, wild flowers, and dewy grass and clover fields, after the dusty, stifling streets of Nijni-Novgorod! All day the river had been thronged with traffic; crowded passenger boats, tugs, strings of barges, and timber rafts bound for the fair. But with sunset came stillness and rest. Now only, at rare intervals, the lights of a steamer flash through the darkness, and the quick liquid patter of paddle-wheels is heard. A couple of cables' length away, one of the side lights is waved quickly to and fro; and, with this mute understanding, we pass the brightly lit vessel to port or starboard, as the case may be.* Then again all is silence, broken,

* This system of navigation may sound risky, but accidents are rare on the Volga. In the daytime a red or green flag is used.

now and then, by the distant baying of a sheep-dog on shore, or some belated fisherman, who, as we pass him, trolls out "Matoushka Volga!"* The stirring air is at once caught up by some of our wakeful deck passengers, for it is one dear to the heart of every Russian, from St. Petersburg to the Pacific.

At midnight I turn in, but not to sleep. A spirited argument is going on between the two tchinovniks (whose acquaintance I have not yet made) as to the respective merits (as regards their social advantages) of Perm and Tomsk. Towards three o'clock I sink into an uneasy slumber, but am shortly afterwards awakened by the hunchback, who, friendly but inebriated, wishes to drink to the health of Queen Victoria and the English. His friend has already succumbed to fatigue (and vodka). My new acquaintance also, to my intense relief, falls asleep during an ineffectual search for the dialogue book, and I finally (at 5 a.m.) rest in peace.

The Volga is well lit, both ashore and afloat.

Powerful electric lights mark the most dangerous banks, while every shoal has its floating light, or, in the most dangerous places, avenues of boats with fires to mark the course. The effect at night was weird and picturesque. Fogs and violent wind-storms are also not unfrequent in that mighty river; but casualties are, thanks to the enormous care and precautions taken, of extremely rare occurrence.

Kazan is reached early next morning. Here we land the greater part of our deck passengers. The old Tartar city, a confused mass of towers, minarets, and domes, is only just visible from the steamer, for the waters of the Volga have receded over six miles within the last two or three hundred years. A tramway now connects the town with the landing-place, but it will be dark ere some of our passengers, mostly Tartars, reach their homes. The tram is already crammed inside, and covered out, with squat, pasty-faced, beady-eyed men and their wives and families, the women in balloon-like skirts of scarlet or yellow silk, white muslin head-dress, and yash-

maks. Water and fruit sellers, with clinking brass cymbals, mingle with the crowd; green-turbaned, grey-bearded hadjis gravely solicit alms; while tiny yellow babies sprawl about in the dusk stark naked, a little silver heart doing duty for the traditional fig-leaf. It is a truly Oriental scene.

Kazan, the conquest of Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century, has a population of one hundred thousand, of which about one-fifth are Tartars, professing (and practising) the Mahometan religion. Many of the mosques are very beautiful, and as jealously guarded as those of Cairo or Stamboul. But in other matters the Kazan Tartar has, to a great extent, become Russianized. His dwelling and habits are European; his wife allowed a certain amount of liberty. His faith alone remains intact.

The European quarter boasts some good shops, notably those in the "Voskressensky" (or "Sunday Street"), the principal thoroughfare. It is clean and well paved. There are also some fine buildings — the Kremlin, bazaar, and

university, where over seven hundred students are educated, chiefly for the legal and medical professions. The library is a splendid one, containing nearly a hundred thousand volumes. But the only hotel in the place is a sad *gargotte*, and a disgrace to so fine a city.

Shortly after leaving Kazan we head to the north and enter the Kama river, which, though eight hundred miles shorter than the Volga, may yet be called one of the great rivers of the world, for, rising in the Oural Mountains, it runs a course of nearly fourteen hundred miles. The confluence of the rivers presents the appearance of a huge lake. At the entrance to the smaller stream a large steamer, the *Ekaterinburg*, was stuck hard and fast on a sandbank. "She has been there two weeks," said the captain. The water where she lay, though in the very centre of the stream, was only two feet deep. A signal of distress was flying, which was lowered on our hoisting an offer of help, and without slackening speed we proceeded on our journey. I put down the alacrity with which our captain responded to

kindness of heart, but afterwards found that there is a penalty of one hundred roubles for disregarding an appeal for assistance on the Volga and Kama rivers.

The scenery of the latter is wild and uncultivated, and cornfields and meadows are lost in the monotonous greyish green of barren steppeland. Occasionally steep cliffs, with dark patches of forest, appear on either side, broken away here and there by the action of time and water, to fall and form miniature islands in the swirling stream. The villages, few and far between, have a squalid, tumble-down appearance, very different to the neat garden-girt settlements on the banks of "Mother Volga." A dozen or so rough, unpainted dwellings, surrounding a white-washed wooden church with high green roof and gilt cross, describes them all. The houses are built in parallel lines, running at right angles from the water's edge. The street or space between them is of grass, and leads, apparently, nowhere in particular. Not a sign of human life is visible, but cattle, pigs, and dogs roam

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about at will in the neglected gardens. Now and then a scarlet-skirted moujik or pink-clad peasant girl, attracted by the steamer, appears on the bank and enlivens the dreary scene. But this is rare. The river is almost as void of active life, though we pass innumerable timber rafts drifting lazily down stream. Some must have been quite two hundred yards long, with neatly built wooden houses for the man in charge and his family—doors, windows, and flower-boxes, complete!

Although the little *Alexis* is, to use a sporting term, as slow as a man, the days on board pass pleasantly enough. The two "tchinovniks" (who are going to Perm) have initiated me into the mysteries of "Vint," or Russian whist, the rules of which the hunchback insists on explaining to me in English. As every word entails a long consultation with the dialogue book, it is some time before I quite grasp the rules of the game.

"What a very ugly back you have! It is all broken!" is this Russian Quasimodo's remark during one of our morning walks on deck. I am

somewhat annoyed at this gratuitous insult, especially as I have put myself to considerable inconvenience trying to hammer a few words of my native tongue into the little wretch's head. But reflecting that a retort would, under the circumstances, be unfair, not to say in bad taste, I curb my temper and laughingly reply, "Have I? Do I stoop so very much?" A few hours later, I discover a seam of my jacket unsewn behind the shoulder. Poor little man! A little knowledge (in languages) is a dangerous thing!

My other fellow-passenger was a singularly uninteresting individual; but the old priest, who was bound for Ufa, in the Orenburg district, was a jolly, red-faced old fellow, a Russian Friar Tuck, with the most extraordinary capacity for stowing away food and drink that has ever come under my notice.

Glorious weather favoured us for two days after leaving Kazan; but at sunset, the evening before reaching Pianybor, a terrific thunderstorm, accompanied by wind and rain, burst over us. The brown river was lashed into huge white

rollers, the thunder seemed to shake the very deck, while the little vessel heeled over under the gale, till, at one time, things looked anything but reassuring. To make matters worse, the *Alexis*, in the middle of the confusion, ran crash into a sandbank and lay there, splashing helplessly about like a huge fish caught in the toils. The old priest was supping at the time, but at the second flash of lightning, which fairly blinded me for a couple of seconds, he fell on his knees and bellowed for mercy. "We are going down! We shall be drowned! Pamaghite! Pamaghite!" * he yelled, his eyes streaming with tears. But the ruling passion did not leave him even now. One fat hand grasped a Bologna sausage, the other a thick slice of bread and butter, from which he took alternate bites during the intervals of prayer.

He left us next day at Pianybor, a station on the Bielaya river, and junction for Ufa. The rain was still pouring in torrents. It was ludicrous to see the old fellow tuck up his black

* "Help! Help!"

skirts, and wade through the mud with, first his niece, and then the pretty nurse, on his shoulders. The Ufa boat lay some distance down the river, and boarding her from a mud-bank across a single plank was no easy operation. It was accomplished without mishap, however, and the old fellow waved us a cheery adieu as we passed. I missed him much, for he was a pleasant companion, full of anecdote and information.

On the morning of the 19th of August we arrived at Perm, a city of four thousand inhabitants, and the western terminus of the Oural Railway. It is yet early, and we have ample time for a ramble through the town before the departure of the train in the evening for Tiumen. Bidding adieu to the tchinovniks, I land, and make my way across the road to the railway station. In the restaurant is a large yellow placard, with the following notice :—

"To Passengers for Siberia!

"In consequence of unusually low water in the river Toura, the steamers of Messrs. Kourbatoff,

plying between Tiumen, Tobolsk, and Tomsk, will embark passengers and *luggage* at Yevlevoi, 103 versts below Tiumen. *Passengers must make their own arrangements for the land transit.* The hour of departure is 3 a.m. on the 10th inst. (O.S.)."

This announcement, in nautical parlance, "brings me up all standing." I know what a business Siberian posting is under the most favourable circumstances; a comfortable tarantass, Government post-houses, experienced yemstchiks, and good horses. But to cross a totally unknown country in a rough telega, at the mercy of extortionate peasants and drunken drivers, will be a new experience indeed. The distance (more than that of London to Dover) will have to be got over somehow, and in considerably less than twenty-four hours, for we do not reach Tiumen till 6 a.m. on the morning of the 21st (N.S.).

Perm is not a prepossessing place. It has a straggling, untidy appearance, and the unfinished

* The Russian almanac, O.S., is twelve days behind the English.

look peculiar to Siberian cities. The streets, however, are broad and well laid out; the houses, some of them, almost palatial, and nearly all of brick or stone. The principal part of the town is on a steep cliff, overlooking the Kama. It was too hot to walk, so I hailed a droshki, a filthy ramshackle affair, in shape like an Irish jaunting car. One need be careful in these conveyances, especially round corners. The Russian "isvostchik" is a terrible creature, and takes a fiendish delight in seeing the unsuspecting stranger measure his length in the road—as I did. The dust was luckily ankle-deep, and it was soft falling.

There is a large arsenal and foundry at Motavilka, which is situated on the Oural Railway. Over five thousand workmen are employed at this establishment, which turns out over three hundred guns yearly, to say nothing of shells and machinery. It is, unfortunately, impossible to visit the place without a special order, which time would not admit of my procuring.

Towards sunset I stroll back to the quay. A large convict barge has just been towed in and

moored alongside the *Alexis*. The temptation to board her is great, but I restrain it, for my arrival at Perm would speedily be flashed to the authorities at Tomsk.

These barges (of one pattern throughout Russia and Siberia, about two hundred and fifty feet long, by thirty feet beam) are of iron, painted black, with brownish-yellow deck-houses, and are constructed to carry about eight hundred prisoners of all grades. Between the deck-houses, occupying the bows and stern, is a huge iron cage about one hundred feet long, with a partition across the centre, separating the men from the women and children. The criminal prisoners are lodged in the public kameras below (of which anon), and the nobles and politicals in private cells in the deck-houses, where are also an infirmary and quarters for the escort and officer in charge.

The barge once alongside, her hatchways are opened, and the cages crowded in less than a minute. It is the supper hour. The deck space on either side of the wire prison is turned, for the

time being, into a miniature market, with baskets of white bread, "kalachi" (cakes), salt fish, sausages, "agourtsi," or pickled cucumber, cigarettes, and other delicacies spread out in tempting array. Such a hubbub never was heard as the stout, sunburnt market women chaff and haggle over their wares with the convicts and their womanfolk.* And the prisoners; what of them? Are these laughing, boisterous fellows really on their way to Siberia,—to the land of despair, desolation, and death? Or is all that we have read concerning that mysterious country a clever fiction conceived by authors, who, like the fat boy in "Pickwick," "want to make our flesh creep" (and purse-strings open) for their own private ends?

* "C'est surtout aux escales que cette barge, chargée d'hommes, de femmes, et d'enfants, devient pittoresque. Les marchands du pays s'approchent avec des paniers d'œufs, du pain, et du lait, puis les échanges s'operent à travers les larges mailles du trellis de la grille. Si une difficulté surgit pour la remise au travers de la grille, d'un object trop volumineux, le petit cosaque prête sans se faire prier ses bons offices. . . . Parfois il arrivait que les marchandes étaient autorisées à pénétrer dans la prison flottante."—Edgar Boulangier, "Notes de Voyage en Siberie." *Paris*, 1891.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OURALS—EKATERINBURG—TIUMEN.

THE Oural Mountains may more aptly be described as downs. Mount Konjakofski, their highest peak, is but little over five thousand feet above sea level, while the scenery through which the Oural Railway passes bears not the slightest resemblance to that of a mountainous region.

It is about five hundred English miles from Perm to Tiumen, the journey being accomplished (with a break of a couple of hours at Ekaterinburg) in about thirty-six hours. The line is a single one, and of easy gradients; Bisser is its highest point, thirteen hundred feet above Perm. Midway between the two termini are three stations, "Europe," "Oural," and "Asia."

The second is on the European frontier, the third in Siberia.

The Oural Railway is the property of a private firm, chiefly composed of Siberian millionaires, who have spared no expense in making this line one of the most luxurious in the world. The almost first-class cars are gorgeously furnished, the sleeping accommodation and washing appliances perfect, the *buffets* at the principal stations almost equal to any first-class restaurant in London or Paris. A brilliantly lit room, marble floors, a well-arranged dining-table covered with snowy linen, costly china, and glittering plate, and a wealth of ferns and flowers, are the traveller's first experience of a Siberian refreshment-room at Nijni-Tagilsk, on the Asiatic side. The swallow-tailed, white-tied waiters are civility itself, the viands well cooked, the wines iced and delicious. Last, but not least, we need not bolt our food. A good hour is allowed for both breakfast and dinner on the Oural Railway.

I share the compartment with a colonel of Cossacks and his pretty wife, on their way to

Irkoutsk, in Eastern Siberia. The former wears a dark green uniform and innumerable orders. He is bottle-nosed, and over fifty years of age. She is more than pretty, fresh from a Paris school, and attired in one of Worth's latest *chef-d'œuvres*, long grey suède gloves, and a becoming little straw hat. It is one of those *mariages de convenance*, so common in France and Russia. A French maid and ten large basket trunks (to say nothing of smaller *impedimenta*) accompany the party. He is genial and *bon garçon;* she, charming, musical, and well read; and I look forward to a pleasant voyage to Tomsk. At Ekaterinburg, however, I am doomed to disappointment, for a stalwart *gendarme* approaches with the fatal news: "No departure from Tiumen." Madame is determined —her maid more so; and the colonel, whom up to now I had looked upon as a resolute fire-eater, becomes a mere unit. "I cannot go without my boxes," says the little lady conclusively. "If they remain, I stay."

An hour later, I am discussing an excellent

breakfast with the colonel and his wilful bride, who very sensibly declines to embark on the somewhat risky journey from Tiumen to Yevlevoi. She eventually wins the day. "Que voulez-vous?" says the colonel, softened by champagne and a substantial *déjeûner*. "Voilà seulement un mois qu'elle sort des Champs Elysées, et la Sibérie n'est pas bien gaie! Faut être indulgent en lune de miel!"

Ekaterinburg is a little over a hundred miles from the Siberian frontier. We should now (according to English novelists and playwrights) be traversing dark impenetrable forest and dreary wastes of steppe-land, with an occasional prison or pack of wolves to break the monotony of the scene. Alas for romance! Ekaterinburg is neither more nor less than a very picturesque imitation of Homburg, with the Taunus Mountains left out. It is little less civilized than the popular German watering-place. First-class hotels, boulevards, *cafés*, asphalt-paved streets, military bands by day, theatres and *casinos* by night—such is Ekaterinburg. A few miles from

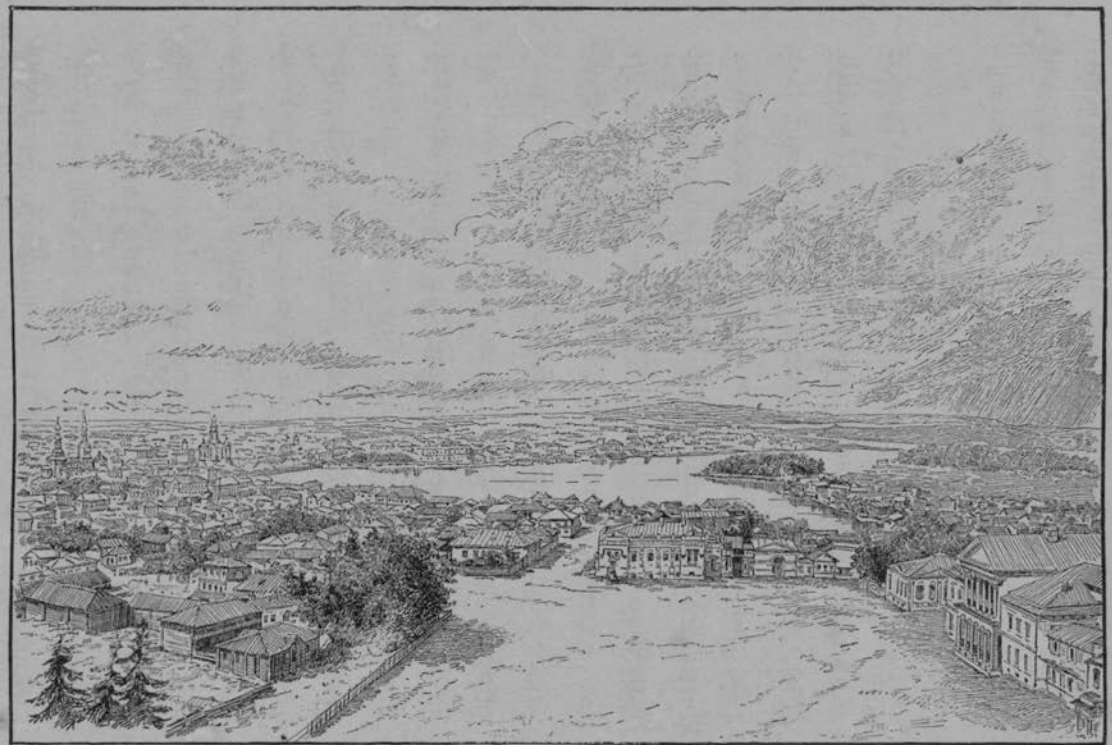
here, by the way, is the stone pillar (the boundary of Siberia) that has witnessed so many tragic and heart-breaking scenes (according to the *Century Magazine*). The readers of that periodical will no doubt be glad to hear that prisoners are now conveyed by rail, in comfortable, well-lit, and well-warmed cars, across the Ourals. Indeed, half the journey to the most distant parts of Siberia is now (as regards exiles and prisoners) accomplished by steam. "Truth is stranger than fiction." Till the completion of the railway, it was an understood thing among the authorities that exile gangs should reach the boundary post at the dinner hour. An extra allowance was made for kvas, with which to drink to the success of the journey through Siberia, a privilege which two-thirds of the prisoners were not slow to avail themselves of. An English friend of mine (then mining in the Ourals) several times witnessed the departure of these gangs. He described it as anything but melancholy. The engraving, however, of the scene in the *Century Magazine* is cleverly drawn, and

says much for the imaginative talent of the artist.

Ekaterinburg, founded in 1793 by Peter the Great, was completed by Catherine I. of Russia, who gave the city her name. It would be considered a pretty place anywhere, being built, unlike most towns in remote Russia, on undulating hills surrounded by pine woods. In the middle of the town the river Iset, though an insignificant stream, forms a large lake, surrounded by trees, gardens, and fine houses, and studded with picturesque islets. On fine summer evenings the crowd of pleasure-boats afloat, and crowded *cafés* and bands of music ashore, impart an air of life and gaiety to the scene rarely met with in Siberia. The soil, too, is of a lighter colour than that further east, which has much to do with the cheerful appearance of Ekaterinburg, as compared with other Siberian towns. Indeed, there is nothing as yet to show that we are nearing the land of exile. Broad, regular streets, handsome stone buildings, and fine shops are seen on every side. The

"Pokroski" Prospect, or principal thoroughfare, which bisects the city, is paved with stone, and would do credit to any second-class European city.

Ekaterinburg is the capital of a district noted throughout the world for its mineral wealth. The Ourals teem with iron, gold, silver, and, last, but not least, platinum. The first named is, however, the most extensively worked, and many Englishmen were at one time employed here by Government. An idea of the cheapness of the metal is gained from the fact that the very beggars one sees in the streets are armed with iron walking-sticks. Many precious stones are also found in the vicinity of Ekaterinburg, the emerald, amethyst, and topaz amongst them. Of the commoner sort there are malachite, lapiz-lazuli, cristal de roche, chrysolite, and the pretty alexandrite, a ruby by night and emerald by day. The traveller is beset on arrival at the hotel by a crowd of lapidaries, who pester him all day, and are nearly as persistent as the sapphire merchants of Colombo. It is only fair to add that he is



EKATERINBURG.

not so unmercifully robbed by the Russian as by the wily Oriental.

Ekaterinburg has many fine public buildings—a governor's palace, university, school of mining, cathedral, three large hospitals, and no less than twenty educational establishments for both sexes, to say nothing of several charitable institutions. One of the latter, a night refuge, built to accommodate two hundred, is kept up entirely by voluntary contributions. There are three hotels; one, the Hôtel d'Amerique, a palatial establishment in the principal street, with, strange to say, moderate prices. For a sumptuously furnished sitting-room and bedroom the charge is ten roubles *per diem.* But here, alas! we bid adieu to comfort, cleanliness, and linen sheets; for at Tiumen, but a few hours distant, the solitary so-called hotel is filthy and full of vermin. That there are no beds at this hostelry goes without saying. This useful article of furniture is looked upon as an unnecessary luxury in Siberia. An amusing story is told by a French traveller of an Irkoutsk millionaire, who was

showing him over his house, furnished at enormous expense by a Parisian firm of upholsterers. "This is my bed," said the Siberian Rothschild, pointing to a gorgeous couch with ebony frame, plush hangings, and Gobelins tapestry. "But I sleep *under* it, you know. It is too good to use!"

A prison carriage is attached to our train at Ekaterinburg. There is yet a quarter of an hour before the departure of the train, which enables me to examine it closely. The car is precisely the same as an ordinary third-class, with barred windows. At one end is a compartment better furnished, with leather seats, for political offenders. It contains one—a man—and his guard, a soldier. The former, a long-haired, dirty individual, in a brown suit, is about thirty years old. Immersed in a newspaper, he consumes innumerable cigarettes, with an occasional sip from a glass of tea, which, with two or three books, stands on a little flap-table before him. Seeing a stranger on the platform, he drops his paper, lowers the window, and addresses me

politely in French. I am prepared for an ebullition of temper on the part of his gaoler, but the latter smokes stolidly on without once interfering, although he does not apparently understand one word of what is said. Our conversation is, as it happens, harmless enough, and bears chiefly upon the discomfort of the coming journey from Tiumen to Yevlevoi; but it might have been rife with treason and dynamite, and no one the wiser. My new acquaintance is cheerful, and not the least reticent. I find that he is on his way to Tomsk to undergo a sentence of five years' banishment for seditious articles, and that this is his second offence.

Leaving Ekaterinburg, the train was crowded, and I learnt with dismay that most of our passengers were proceeding to Tobolsk and Tomsk. I resolved, therefore, to up betimes, seize the first droshki, and gallop into town to secure a telega, or if possible a tarantass. Fortune, and the fact that Russians are proverbially dilatory *en voyage*, favoured me. When, at 6 a.m., we arrived at Tiumen, for

one that followed my example twenty sought the buffet for tchi, cigarettes, and vodka, regardless of the fact that vehicles were scarce, and that there was even now barely time to do the distance and catch the steamer. The fact that a whole week must elapse before they could get another did not seem to trouble them in the least. As it was, about two-thirds of them were left behind.

Tiumen has been aptly named the "doorstep" of Siberia. It is the principal point of departure, summer and winter, for Russian Asia, the southern post road, which runs eastwards through Orenburg, being rarely used. From May to September is the pleasantest season for visiting these regions. The traveller then embarks at Tiumen on a comfortable well-found steamer, which lands him, after a journey of about nine days, at Tomsk. The voyage thence to the borders of China is accomplished by posting. From October to April, when the rivers are ice-locked, the slow but comfortable steamer is exchanged for the swift but fatiguing sleigh. The route is

then by the great post road, *viâ* Omsk, a distance of fifteen hundred versts.

Rain, which has been falling continuously for twenty-four hours, is still pouring in torrents as we dash, in a very dirty and dilapidated droshki, across the grassy plain, now half under water, that separates the town from the railway station. "Another twelve hours of this, and the barin * would not have had to go by road to Yevlevoi!" says the ragged driver with a grin. "Attend to your horses, idiot," is my somewhat ungracious reply, as we bump in and out of a deep rut with a crash that sends the mud flying into the air, and nearly breaks an axle. My irritability is scarcely to be wondered at. Even when bathed in bright sunshine, Tiumen, with its colony of hovels surrounding a few insignificant brick houses, is not a cheerful spot. This morning, seen through a mist of driving rain, the grim wooden dwellings, black roads, and background of grey, watery sky, look singularly uninviting.

Siberians are not early risers, especially in wet

* Gentleman.

weather. It is now past seven o'clock, but the streets are deserted, doors barred, and shutters closed. Here and there a stray pig wallows in the mire, or a half-starved dog whines and shivers in the rain, but not a human being is visible. Nearing the river, however, a cottage door opens and a sleepy and towzled, but pretty peasant girl appears on the threshold, slowly rolling her pink skirts to the knee, and disclosing a pair of bare and shapely white legs preparatory to plunging into the black sea of mud, for a visit to the wood-stack or poultry-yard. I glean from her with some difficulty that "Ivan of the landing stage" has a tarantass, but she does not think he will let it out for hire to go to Yevlevoi. The roads are in *such* a state! If the barin would only buy it, now? But I am round the corner and out of hearing long before she can finish the sentence, *en route* for "Ivan of the landing stage."

Ivan (who I subsequently discover is my little pink friend's *fiancé*) is fortunately up and stirring. He is also, fortunately for a Siberian

peasant, singularly intelligent and quick-witted. But he shakes his head when I propose to hire his tarantass. "The road is so bad, gospodin, and you will have to gallop the whole way, for the *Kosagofski* is towing a prison barge to Tomsk, and cannot delay her departure an hour. Why won't the barin buy it?" he adds, brightening up. "It is as good as new, and he shall have it cheap. As for horses, I will see that a troika is put in instantly, and the barin will be first on the road. That means a good deal in Siberia!"

It does, as I am aware, especially to-day. There are three stations or villages, Ivan informs me, between here and Yevlevoi: Borka, Dobrouna, and Oshalka. It is not a regular post road. Neither post-houses nor horses are the property of the Government, but in the hands of private proprietors, who let them out or not as they think fit. "Therefore," urges Ivan, "unless you are first away you will have no chance. The horses will all be taken. There are not many."

Time presses. It is getting on for eight

o'clock. Already two droshkis have passed us, full of passengers evidently searching for conveyances. "What will you take for your carriage?" I ask desperately. The answer surprises me: "Fifty roubles," including the harness—less than half what I imagined I should have to pay for the hire. I eagerly close with Ivan, who runs briskly off to get the troika ready. In less than half an hour I shall be away, "first on the road." This is luck indeed.

Ivan is a good hour away. Meanwhile I stand cooling my heels on the covered landing stage, from which, under happier circumstances, I should have embarked upon the *Kosagofski*. Rain was needed. A score of narrow rivulets, running through broad patches of yellow sand, now represent the Toura, a river, on ordinary occasions, of considerable size. I am growing impatient, when a jingle of bells is heard, and Ivan reappears, with the troika and—my tarantass. Great heavens! No wonder it was cheap. Never mind; in with the luggage, and off we go!

A properly constructed tarantass is, though

springless, by no means uncomfortable. The carriage is hung on light, flexible wooden poles, which give with every movement, while the axle appears, to any one but a Russian, inordinately broad. The wheels are small. There are no seats, for the deep, boat-like body of the vehicle carries his luggage as well as the traveller. A stout leather hood, met by an apron of the same material, protects the latter from wind and rain. In front is a small seat for the driver; behind, a box for implements for repairs during the journey.

The packing of a tarantass requires no little care and experience. "Avoid boxes," says Mr. Lansdell, in his entertaining work "Through Siberia," "as you would the plague. The edges and corners will cruelly bruise your back and legs. Choose rather flat portmanteaus and soft bags, and spread them on a layer of hay at the bottom of the tarantass. Then put over them a thin mattress, and then a hearth-rug. Next put at the back of the carriage two or more pillows of the softest down." Better advice was

never given. Would that I had read it before crossing Siberia in 1887. The knowledge would have saved me many a weary hour of discomfort, not to say pain. The same writer adds, speaking of the telega, or country cart: "It is a roofless, seatless, springless, semi-cylindrical tumbril, mounted on poles which connect two wooden axle-trees. From such a fate (as travelling in this) may you, gentle reader, be delivered." I was not.

The reader now knows what a tarantass should be. Let me describe my new purchase, which (even Ivan owned) had twice done the journey to and from the Chinese frontier. It had a body (once painted chocolate colour, but now of a light neutral tint), part of a hood, and four wheels, one of the latter (the near fore one) doubtful. The apron had nearly disappeared, the jagged remains showing that it had been used up by degrees to repair other portions of the vehicle. One iron step only remained. Viewed sideways, a decided list of the tarantass to port (to use a nautical phrase) would scarcely

have been noticed by a casual observer, at any rate for the first part of the journey. Towards sundown, however, it became absolutely necessary to cling like a monkey to the framework of the hood. The bottom of the carriage had rotted away into holes, till but a few strips of wood remained. I had undoubtedly been done. But one must, in Siberian travel, be thankful for small mercies. There was a box for the driver, and three wretched screws in the traces. Not one of the beasts looked fit to carry a douga,* but they proved to be as hard as nails, and went like the wind.

The rain soon ceased after leaving Tiumen. When, at 10.30 a.m., we rattled into Borka, the sun was shining in a cloudless sky. Borka contains a large Tartar population. The bright, gaudy costumes affected by the Tartar women lend a touch of warmth and colour to the black roads, drab dwellings, and sombre dress of the Siberian peasant, while the graceful minarets of the mosque are seen close by the church steeple.

* The high yoke collar worn by the centre horse in a troika.

As we entered the village we passed a funeral. The corpse, that of a young girl, lay in an open bier covered with wild flowers, while a number of the faithful in white and green turbans followed the procession, chanting, in a low nasal key, the funeral rites of the Mahometan faith. This Eastern scene in the midst of European-looking surroundings seemed strangely out of place. I was surprised to see the respect paid by the Christian population to the *cortége*. Many uncovered as it passed, proving that, even in these wild, uncivilized districts, the Czar's subjects are scarcely the cruel bigots English Russophobes would have us believe.

There was not much delay at Borka, though the post-master, a greasy, villainous-looking Jew, was somewhat inclined to haggle over the "progon," or posting money. A word of advice to the tyro traveller in Siberia: Never haggle over posting money, or the length of your voyage will be at least trebled. Be content with the knowledge that, even when you are overcharged, the sum is about one-third of what you would

pay in any other country. Take, for instance, this drive, during which I gave every yemstchik double fees, and paid in the same ratio for horses. What was the result? I, a stranger in the land, arrived on board the *Kosagofski*, the whole journey having cost me £8 10*s*. From this £6 must be deducted for the tarantass and hire of telega. I suffered enough in all conscience, but some half-dozen passengers, who succeeded in catching the steamer, far more. They travelled in telegas, disputed every progon (and were unable to obtain any food in consequence), and paid £2 each for the journey. Was the extra discomfort worth ten shillings?

Borka is a typical Siberian village. One long straggling street of great width, with unpainted wooden houses on either side, ranging from a hundred yards to a couple of miles in length, is a description that suffices for all, from Tiumen to the borders of China. Occasionally a white-washed or red-brick cottage breaks the monotony of the sombre line of dwellings, the residence of some lucky peasant who has made money. But

this is rare. The wooden post-house, with its yellow walls, imperial coat of arms, and black-and-white verst post, is usually the only spot of colour visible, if we except the red roof of the *étape* prison, which stands, as a rule, some distance outside the village boundary or "enceinte." The latter, formed of rough wooden rails, keeps the cattle from straying. It has two gates, barring the road at either end of the settlement, in charge of decrepit old men, clad in filthy rags, who for a few kopeks let the traveller through. These gatekeepers, who live in rough wooden shanties, scarcely bigger than dog-kennels, by the roadside, are generally time-expired criminal convicts. The post in winter is no sinecure.

Perhaps the most depressing feature of a Siberian village is the utter absence of trees or gardens. Occasionally in summer an attempt is made at ornamentation, by sticking large bunches of fir or birch into the ground; but the rootless shrubs soon become withered and yellow, and tend to increase rather than diminish the melancholy aspect of the scene. The dwellings

themselves are built of wooden beams, laid one on the other, and calked with moss, the roof being of planks. Some of the houses have stone foundations and look well enough, but the majority are in anything but an upright position. Warped with time, snow, and change of weather, the wood slips, the flimsy foundations give in all directions, and the structure heels over, until door and windows almost sink into the ground. The first *coup d'œil* of a Siberian village is suggestive of a fleet of dismasted ships riding at anchor in a heavy gale of wind.

The rapid motion and clashing collar-bells had an exhilarating effect on the spirits as we tore across the pleasant sunlit country, past vast stretches of pasture land, and fields of new-mown hay and corn ripening for the sickle. Wild flowers grew freely by the roadside, and, mingling with the scent of beans and clover, shed a delicious perfume around, while overhead fleecy cloudlets scudded across a sky of the deepest blue. There were but two drawbacks to perfect enjoyment: one, that confounded wheel, which

was already beginning to roll about in the most alarming manner; and the other, hunger. At Tiumen there was plenty to eat, but no time. At Borka the situation was reversed, for the greasy Jew either could not or would not produce provisions. We now had a stage of twenty-five versts, or about eighteen miles, before us, with no certainty of getting anything eatable even then. Half-way, the pangs of hunger become almost insupportable, and I make inquiries of the yemstchik.

"At Oshalka," he replied, "you will be sure to get something, for Nadia lives there, and it is the best post-house on this road. The barin will eat his fill then, and be able to look at a pretty woman at the same time."

This sounds pleasant enough.

"How far is Oshalka?"

"Oh, the stage after the next—a little matter of forty-five versts" (about thirty-five miles).

At Dobrouna I manage, with difficulty, to secure a large piece of rye bread, which tastes of soot mixed with treacle, and as is black

as coal. Still, it will stave off starvation till we reach the fair Nadia's homestead. She is evidently the belle of these parts. Even my yemstchik (who cannot be far short of eighty years old, and has to be almost lifted on to the box) never tires of extolling her charms. But I fear I am ungallant enough to look forward more to the contents of the Oshalka larder, than an introduction to its fair owner.

Before leaving Dobrouna we unscrew the shaky wheel and examine the axle, which is nearly red hot, and worn away to the thickness of a little finger. We reduce the heated iron, with buckets of cold water, to a normal temperature, and replace the wheel, which, to make matters worse, has lost a spoke since leaving Borka. The yemstchik looks grave and shakes his head. But though he fears a break down before reaching Oshalka, he is evidently not of a nervous disposition, and we gallop out of the yard *ventre-à-terre*, at a pace that would probably, in the event of a mishap, mean a broken limb at least.

There are no finer drivers in the world than

the Russians, though their style is certainly unique. It is a common thing to see a Siberian yemstchik start off at full gallop with six horses before he is fairly on the box, gathering up his reins anyhow, in a bunch, and disentangling them as he goes. Many of the yemstchiks in Government service on the great post road are mere children, fourteen or fifteen years old, whom the horses could pull off the box with ease. The cabmen of London and Paris might well take a lesson in the treatment of animals from their Russian brethren, who seldom if ever use a whip, but drive almost entirely with the reins and voice. During a long posting voyage of nearly three weeks from Kiakhta on the Russo-Chinese frontier to Tomsk in Western Siberia,* I do not think I once saw a horse struck, though the language occasionally indulged in was something beyond description. We passed but few conveyances, and fewer people during the day. Two or three telegas, a string of caravan-carts with merchandise for Tiumen, and perhaps a dozen

* See "From Pekin to Calais by Land."

peasants, men and women, with spade and hoe over their shoulders, returning from work. Though the land is well cultivated, the population of this district is small. At dusk, to my great relief, the lights of Oshalka glimmered on the horizon. The wheel would at any rate carry us so far. Half an hour later, I was comfortably installed in Madame Nadia's cosy kitchen, discussing a steaming bowl of "shtchi"* and a delicious omelet, washed down by several glasses of fiery, but, under the circumstances, very acceptable vodka.

The yemstchiks had not exaggerated. Madame Nadia was more than pretty; she was beautiful. A tall, graceful figure, well set off by the picturesque peasant dress, tiny hands as white as china, a clear, fresh complexion, deep violet eyes with long black lashes, wavy auburn hair, and small, level, pearly teeth just visible through a pair of lips that seemed "made alone for kisses." Her features, in repose, had the sweet, half-sad expression that seems the birthright of

* Cabbage soup.

every Russian woman, rich or poor; but her laugh was merry and musical, like a chime of silver bells. Monsieur Nadia (his surname was unpronounceable) was ill-looking, silent, and morose—a contrast to his charming wife, who,



NADIA.

while her spouse went in quest of horses, sat down, lit a cigarette, and put me through an exhaustive catechism. Where was I going? What was my religion? Why was I going to Siberia? Were the English women all as pretty

as this?—producing a *Graphic* portrait of Mrs. Langtry* from the depths of a cupboard. Rattling on without pausing for a reply, my pretty hostess then enlightened me as to her own affairs. She has lived at Oshalka all her life, and was now twenty-two, but some day she would go to Moscow notwithstanding *him*—with



OSHALKA.

a wink in her husband's direction. She had had two babies, and was expecting another—but at this juncture monsieur re-entered, and, without a word, took his wife by the shoulders, and roughly

* Mrs. Langtry's portraits seem popular in Siberia. I came across one in 1887, near Kiakhta, on the borders of China. See "From Pekin to Calais by Land."

pushing her into the adjoining room, slammed the door to. The Siberian peasant was evidently not by nature a polite individual, for pretty Nadia seemed quite used to this kind of treatment, half opening the door as soon as her husband's back was turned, to wave me a laughing farewell. Poor Monsieur Nadia! Let us hope he was never taken to Moscow!

> "Eve n'est plus demoiselle,
> Tant mieux pour elle;
> C'est Adam qu'est son mari,
> Tant pis pour lui!"

The night was fine and starlit, though so cold as to render a fur cloak necessary. The sudden changes of temperature at sunset during the summer months is one of the most trying phases of Siberian travel. As we were starting, a telega clattered into the yard with two of our passengers, fat burly men of the true Siberian type, with red faces and long beards, dressed in high rusty black boots, shabby, ill-fitting clothes, almost green with age, and flat-peaked caps. Only nine of their companions, they said, had

managed to get away from Tiumen. The remainder would have to await the departure of the next steamer a week hence. The newcomers then alighted, called for the *samovar, and prepared to make themselves comfortable. I reminded them that we had not too much time to spare. "Never fear, gospodin! we will catch you up!" said one. "Take care we don't pass you!" called out the other, with a laugh. Alas! there is many a true word spoken in jest.

It is now nearly ten o'clock. The steamer is advertised to leave at 3 a.m. We thus have a good five hours before us, and, all being well, at least two to spare; for my new yemstchik, a squat little Tartar, rattles the troika along at a good twelve miles an hour, notwithstanding the heavy going. A repast with the fair Nadia has banished apprehension, and the enjoyment of a cigar in the moonlight is trebly enhanced by the thought that a few hours hence, all being well, I shall stand on the deck of the *Kosagofski*, my difficulties at an end. The cold night air, monotonous jingle of yoke-bells, and rapid, silent

motion through deep, yielding sand, soon have a soporific effect. Thoroughly fagged out, I drop into an uneasy dose—a kind of nightmare of the day, in which Tartar funerals, steamboats, Nadias, yemstchiks, and shaky cart-wheels predominate. Then, with a crash, I awake, to find myself at full length on the ground, the tarantass on its side, and the little Tartar cursing and yelling at his terrified horses, who are rapidly kicking themselves clear of the rotten rope harness. The sword of Damocles has fallen: while going at a hand gallop the axle has snapped off, breaking the wheel in two places.

I must have slept some time, for the moon, a thin thread of silver, is now fast disappearing. We are apparently in the middle of a vast plain, broken only by a black belt of pine forest. Far away against the sky-line some lights are twinkling. It is Oshalka. We have come sixteen versts. There are still over twenty between us and Yevlevoi.

Having quieted the horses, the Tartar yemstchik proceeds, after the philosophical manner of

his race, to deliberately fill up and light a pipe. He then settles himself comfortably in the soft sand, using the hood of the tarantass as a chair-back, and announces his intention (in very bad Russian) of remaining where he is till "daylight doth appear." Promises of extra bakshish are useless. It is only by threats and judicious display of a revolver that I at length induce him to get up and try and remedy the mischief. "There was a village near here three days ago," he says at last, doubtfully, as though it were quite possible that the houses had walked away in the meantime, "but I don't see it now."

At this moment a weird, wailing cry to our left broke the dead stillness—a strange, unearthly cry, followed the next instant by a chorus of deafening howls, alternating with short, sharp barks, and the sound of snarling and fighting. "Volks!"* said my companion. "There's a sheep-fold near here; the village can't be far off. Come, barin; we will have a try, anyhow."

So saying, he gathered up the remnants of the

* Wolves.

wheel, and, with a crack of his whip, the troika slowly moved on, the broken axle ploughing a long deep track as we proceeded.

The ferocity of the Siberian wolf has, like many other things in this little-known land, been greatly exaggerated. I came across several



A BREAK-DOWN.

during the overland journey from China to Europe in 1887, and was surprised at the alacrity with which they invariably fled at the sight of man. In winter, when half famished and desperate, large bands have been known to attack solitary and unarmed wayfarers, but this is comparatively rare. Mr. Charles Eden relates,

in "Frozen Asia," an adventure which befell one of the *employés* of the Russo-American Telegraph Company, which proves that the bark of these animals is, even in the depth of winter, considerably worse than their bite. "While fishing near the middle of a small lake, Young" (the gentleman in question) "was startled by hearing cries of wolves very near by. Glancing in the direction from which the sound came, he soon saw a large buck reindeer dash down on to the lake, and rush along the shore within a hundred yards of him. A minute afterwards, seven full-grown, famished-looking wolves, of very large size, also dashed down upon the lake at full speed, with heads and tails in the air, following the tracks of the deer. Young seized his axe, but kept perfectly still, hoping the animals would not perceive him. On they dashed, and were just about to dash by, when, one of the pack catching sight of him, the whole band rushed towards him. Anticipating a severe struggle, he sprang to his feet, swinging his arms and axe, and shouting at the top of his voice. The wolves were so struck with astonish-

ment, that they stopped immediately, and squatted on the ice within a hundred feet of him. But in a minute they gained courage, and made another dash for him. Having observed the effect of his first actions he repeated them, but this time with still greater vehemence—yelling, swinging his axe, and starting towards them. They paused only for a moment, and then fled, taking up the trail of the deer."

To-night the crack of a whip was apparently enough to send them scampering away, helter-skelter, for we heard no more of them afterwards.

Time creeps on apace, but in vain we peep in all directions for a light or sign of human habitation. After plodding on at a snail's pace for nearly an hour, the sound of yoke-bells is heard behind us. Presently the shadowy forms of a telega and three men loom out of the darkness. They are our friends from Oshalka, who, although they pull up and commiserate, do not offer any practical assistance, as, indeed, how could they? Something is gained, however. Their yemstchik, a native of the village (with an unpronounceable

name) we are seeking, put us in the right road, and also tell us of an inhabitant, one Simonoff (or son of Simon), who has horses and telegas for hire. "If we can wake him," adds our informant, dubiously. "He is a very sound sleeper." "*Au revoir*," cry the two Siberians, as they jingle merrily away to Yevlevoi; "we shall meet to-morrow." Shall we? is my mental (and despairing) reflection, as the tarantass, turning sharp to the right, takes a flying leap down a steep bank, and into a damp sloshy pasture ankle-deep in water. Here it becomes hopelessly embedded in the mud. There is nothing for it but to take the horses out. Leaving the luggage to its fate, we splash along for a couple of hundred yards or so, when one of the horses blunders head-first against a wooden railing. It is the village *enceinte!* A few moments more and we have found the gate, which, failing to wake the old custodian, we calmly proceed to take off its hinges. Striking a match, I look at my watch, and see that it is not yet midnight. There is yet a chance. But how to find the son of Simon's

dwelling, and when found, how to wake the proprietor?

The village is a very small one—twenty houses at most, a whitewashed dwelling conspicuous amongst them. It is the only one with a cattle-yard and outbuildings. "This must be Simonoff's," says the yemstchik, violently shaking the heavy padlocked gates. "Simonoff! Eh; Simonoff!" yells the little Tartar. But there is no reply. The ripple of a brook hard by, the crunching of hay by cattle in the yard, are the only sounds that break the dark, dead silence. "We must break one of the windows," says my companion, after a pause. "It is useless trying to climb over these gates." But the words are scarcely out of his mouth, when a light appears at the upper window, the lattice is opened, and a long thin object slowly projected. Simonoff is evidently not to be trifled with: it is the barrel of a gun!

"Kharosho!* Don't shoot; we are not robbers," cries my companion, well under cover

* "It's all right."

of one of his horses. A spirited conversation then takes place. Simon's offspring is evidently not of a conciliatory disposition. It is some time before he will even discuss the business on hand. "Was there ever such a thing known as waking honest people at such an hour, and with a Government official in the house too? Who knows what trouble may not come of it?"—the gun barrel, meanwhile, moving erratically about in anything but a reassuring manner. The mention of progon, however, has a magical effect. "How much will the barin give?" "Twenty roubles," says the Tartar decidedly, motioning me to be silent; and the gun is instantly withdrawn. "Sitchas," mutters the irate one, closing the window; "I am coming down."

"Sitchas" signifies (metaphorically) in the Russian language "immediately" or "at once;" practically it means anything from an hour (rarely less) to a couple of months. Like the Spanish "mañana," it is an elastic term. On this occasion, however, I was fortunate, for a telega (with a fresh pair of horses) was ready in less

than twenty minutes. In the mean time Madame Simonoff, mollified by her spouse's successful bargain, produces a samovar and tea. I was glad to find that the son of Simon had apparently little to fear from the tchinovnik—a red-bearded, spectacled individual, who had evidently been making a night of it, and who insisted on kissing me before I left, in token, I presume, of forgiveness. With some difficulty we find the baggage, which is transferred in a very few minutes from tarantass to telega. Then, with a clash of bells, the sturdy little horses set off at full gallop. I did not forget that drive for some time. The reader may well imagine that a telega (described at p. 50) is not a luxurious conveyance. My bones ached for days; added to which, the dirty straw on which we reclined swarmed with myriads of uninvited fellow-travellers, who soon made their presence unmistakably felt.

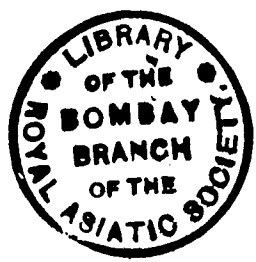
The little Tartar did not spare his team. The son of Simon would have opened his eyes, and trembled for his telega, could he have seen us. On we flew at a breakneck pace, over rut, bush,

and boulder, as often off the road as on it. But with every leap the little cart took, every crash that seemed to loosen one's very teeth, came the consolatory reflection that we might, after all, catch the steamer; if not—well, *tant pis*, I had, at any rate, done my best.

At the first break of dawn we sight Yevlevoi. "She is still there," yells the little Tartar, wild with excitement, and urging on his team, faster and faster, till we are enveloped in a cloud of dust, and the stones fly high in the air around us. Had a pin or rivet given way at that moment, I doubt if these pages would ever have been written. My driver was galloping, with a loose rein, down the side of an almost perpendicular hill with a sharp turn to the right, not a hundred yards in front of us. But yemstchiks, like drunken men, are watched over by a special Providence, and we dashed on to the plain in safety. Yes; there were the red and green lights. We had caught the steamer. But it was a near thing, for the last whistle sounded as our horses, in a cloud of steam and white

with lather, pulled up on the wooden landing stage.

Presenting my sturdy little driver with a substantial *pour boire* (I had already left him the tarantass as a legacy), I make my way on board. The boat is crowded with passengers, who, it appears, have been waiting here for some days. There is not a private cabin to be had for love or money. Even in the public saloon, most of the couches are already occupied. But at length I find one. Securing my baggage, I throw myself on the soft, yielding velvet, and, thoroughly exhausted, am soon in the land of dreams.



CHAPTER VII.

THE OBI—TOBOLSK—TOMSK.

THE *Kosagofski* is one of a fine fleet owned by Messrs. Kourbatof and Ignatof, who hold the Government contract for conveying mails and prisoners, or, more correctly speaking, for *towing* the latter; for these steamers (which must not, on account of shoals and sandbanks, exceed four feet in draught) are not laden with merchandise. The latter is stowed in large flat-bottomed barges. In 1845 the first steamship, a tiny cockleshell, was launched. The river trade of Siberia has since then steadily increased, and thirty to forty iron vessels (built at Tiumen) now ply, during the summer months, between Tiumen and Omsk, Tomsk and Semïpalatinsk, on the south; and northward as far as Obdorsk, near the Gulf of

Obi, in the Arctic Ocean. The Obi * is usually open to navigation till the 10th of October. It is, however, risky travelling after the 1st of that month. On the 14th (in 1879) the river froze so suddenly that the *Kosagofski*, nipped in the ice, was unable to proceed. The accident fortunately happened near Sourgout, a small town, where the passengers managed to obtain sleighs for the remainder of the journey; while the crew were supplied from the same place with provisions on board during their dreary captivity, which lasted till the following spring.

Although my experience of river travelling is considerable, I can safely say that I have never travelled in greater comfort than on the *Kosagofski*. These paddle-steamers are all built on the same model. The first-class accommodation, which is forward, consists of a large public and half-a-dozen private sleeping cabins below; a well-fitted, roomy dining saloon above; and, over all, a large hurricane deck, which forms an excellent promenade in fine weather. The second-

* This river is called the Ob by Russians.

class cabins are aft, where the deck is also roofed over with iron for the accommodation of third-class passengers. There are no fixed hours for meals. You order your food as you want it, and it is brought you well cooked and on *clean* plates. Of ice and other luxuries there is no lack. The wines are Crimean—red and white—and if somewhat rough at first to a delicate palate, are, at any rate, pure, which is more than can be said of the vintages at many first-class European hotels. The prices are absurdly cheap: a good dinner of three courses may be had for a rouble. This is, perhaps, not surprising, considering that at Tobolsk fish and game may be bought at a twentieth part their cost in England. Mr. Lansdell mentions that at Sourgout he was offered a pair of ducks for twopence halfpenny, and at Inchova a couple of pike, weighing probably twenty pounds, for fivepence. A young calf, he was told, could be bought for sixpence!

Comfortable as she is, however, the *Kosagofski* has two drawbacks: one, the absence of proper washing appliances; the other, the burning of

wood fuel, of which about eighty tons a day are consumed. A dark ill-smelling hutch, with a brass tap, emitting a tiny jet of dirty river-water, constituted the sole lavatory on board (for both sexes); while my clothes, on arriving at Tomsk, were literally riddled with holes, caused by sparks from the funnel. On the Volga petroleum alone is used for the boiler, but the transport of the oil across the Ourals would be too costly for the Kourbatof line.

The evening of the next lazy, uneventful day sees us at Tobolsk, and here we land most of our first-class passengers, which gives us more breathing room. The sun is setting as we near the white picturesque city, dimly visible through the dusk, and towering over the grey waters of the Irtysh, a lasting tribute to the courage and resolution of Yermak Timoféef, the Cossack who, with a mere handful of men, conquered Siberia.

The latter country was unknown to the ancients. It was not till the year 1558 that the Czar Ivan Vassilivitch despatched a small expedition across the Ourals, defeated a few insignificant Tartar

tribes, and assumed the high-sounding, but somewhat empty title of "Lord of Siberia." But his triumph was short-lived, for less than a year afterwards the Tartar ruler, Koutchoum Khan (a descendant of Chengiz Khan), raised an army, routed the Russians, and drove them back into their own territory.

Discomfited at the failure of his enterprise, the Czar now turned his attention to commerce, and a considerable trade was opened up with Persia and Bokhara. It was, however, carried on with great difficulty, for the Russian caravans were continually stopped and pillaged by the Don Cossacks — a horde of robbers inhabiting the banks of the river from whence they derive their name. Exasperated by these continual inroads, the Czar attacked the freebooters, and succeeded in killing a large number and dispersing the remainder. Amongst the latter was a band of six thousand men, under the command of a chief, one Yermak Timoféef. These made their way to a free trading settlement on the banks of the Kama, where the merchants, more perhaps from

compulsion than hospitality, entertained them during the following winter.

It was here that Yermak first heard of Siberia. The tempting description given by his hosts of the rich country lying the far side of the mountains was probably due to the fact that the latter were getting rather weary of their uncouth (and unbidden) guests. Siberia was then governed by a number of petty chiefs, most of whom acknowledged Koutchoum Khan as suzerain. The latter prince's dominions extended from the Obi (then the eastern boundary of Siberia) to the Tobol, his head-quarters being at Sibir,* a small fortress on the Irtysh river, the ruins of which are still standing.

An unsuccessful attempt to reach Siberia in the summer of 1578 did not dishearten Yermak, for in June of 1579 he again set out with five thousand men. In eighteen months he managed to reach the village of Tchingi,† on the Toura river, by which time his followers were reduced,

* The name of Siberia is derived from this place.

† Now Tiumen.

by hunger, privation, and fatigue, to fifteen hundred men, while a large force of Tartars, commanded by Koutchoum Khan, awaited them. When the combatants met, Yermak's force numbered only five hundred men—nine-tenths of those who left the Kama river having perished. A desperate fight, at enormous odds, ended in the total defeat of the Tartar tribes. Yermak then pushed on to and occupied Sibir, where he was installed as "Prince of Siberia" by his few remaining companions.

For a time the chief and his followers enjoyed a well-merited rest. Peace, however, was destined to be of short duration, for insurrections among the Tartars became frequent, owing to the intrigues of Koutchoum Khan, who still retained great influence over his late subjects. It soon became evident that the gallant Cossack must seek for assistance from Europe. One of his trustiest officers was therefore sent to Moscow with a small escort, with instructions to state the progress which Yermak had made in Siberia, which country, the messenger was to add, had

been conquered in the name of the Czar. A present of valuable furs accompanied the embassy.

A price, however, having been put upon his chief's head, the envoy approached Moscow with some misgivings. But on being acquainted with the true state of affairs the Czar at once granted the outlaws a free pardon, and despatched a force of five hundred men to their assistance, while Yermak himself was presented with a costly fur robe, a suit of golden armour, and a large sum of money in acknowledgment of his bravery and success.

Reinforced by the Czar's troops, Yermak then recommenced operations, laying siege to a small fortress still belonging to Koutchoum Khan, on the banks of the Irtysh. Here, however, the Tartar chief was too much for the Cossack, and defended the entrenchments so bravely that the Russians were compelled to retreat towards Sibir, followed at a short distance by the enemy, who only awaited a favourable moment to attack them when unprepared. The opportunity soon oc-

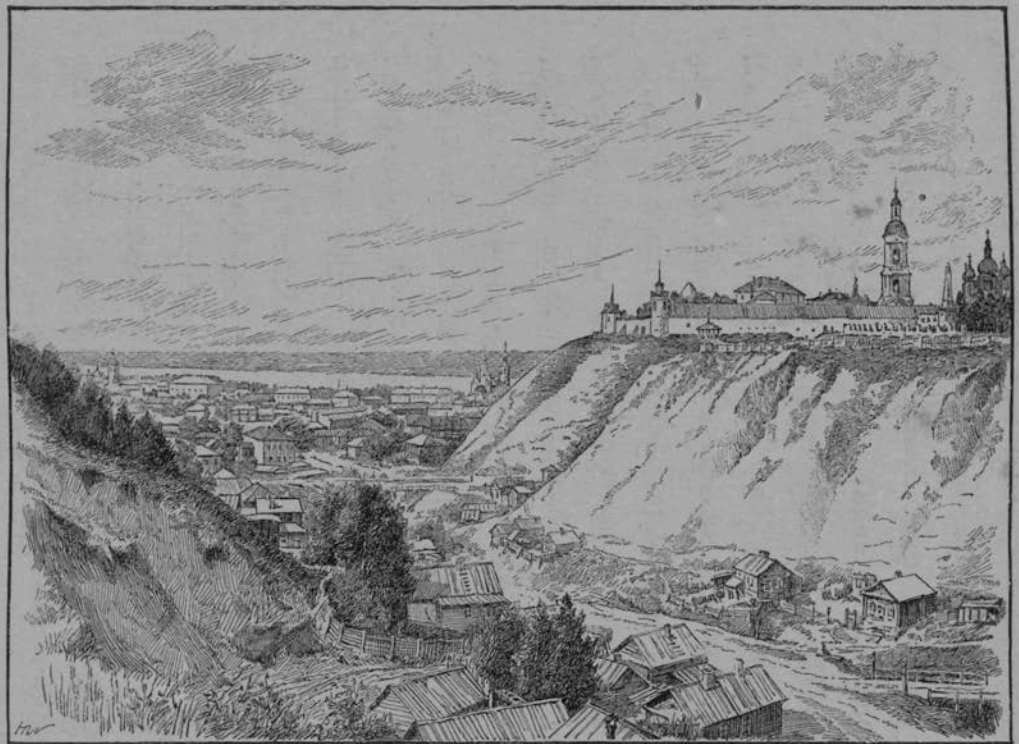
curred. Wearied by a long and harassing march, the little band of three hundred men had encamped for the night on a small islet formed by two branches of the river Irtysh. The presence of an enemy being unsuspected, the Russians abandoned their usual precautions and sought repose. At this moment Koutchoum Khan, with a picked body of men, stole down on his foes, and, having forded the river in silence, fell upon them with such complete success, that the half-sleeping men were cut down before they could use their arms. Only one man escaped to bear the news of the disaster to Sibir, and with it the intelligence that the gallant Cossack, Yermak Timoféef, was no more. The latter had fought bravely to the last, cutting his way single-handed through the enemy's ranks, and making for the banks of the Irtysh. Here he found a boat, into which he attempted to throw himself, but the distance between the shore and the place where it was moored, proved too great, and he fell into the water where the weight of his armour (the golden suit he had received in recognition

of his splendid services) dragged him to the bottom of the river.

Upon hearing the news of their leader's defeat and death, the garrison of Sibir retired, and Siberia was again free from the Russian invaders. The armistice was not, however, of long duration; for the court of Moscow soon sent another expedition into the country, which encountered but little opposition and speedily re-established Muscovite rule. Fresh reinforcements enabled them to extend their operations and to erect strong fortresses at Tobolsk, Tara, and other places. The stream of conquest then flowed onward apace. Tomsk was founded in 1604, and became the starting-point of new expeditions. Yeneseisk was founded in 1619, and Krasnoyarsk eight years later. Small parties then pushed on to Lake Baikal, and thence to the valley of the Lena, everywhere erecting stockades which gradually grew into towns, and in all cases subduing the natives. Yakoutsk was founded in 1632, not without some difficulty and opposition from the powerful Yakoute tribe, and in 1639

the Sea of Okhotsk was reached. Thus in the space of sixty years, and through the energy of a few adventurous Cossacks and traders, was added to the Russian empire a territory of incalculable wealth as large as Europe.

The *Kosagofski* is to make a stay of three hours here. There is time, then, for a stroll through the streets of the quaint old city, the ancient capital of Siberia, which, however, is now but of little importance. Tobolsk, chief town of a district of that name, which is nearly eight times the size of Great Britain and Ireland, was founded in 1587, and consists, like Nijni-Novgorod, of an upper and lower town. The former, a plain white-washed mass of buildings, is called the citadel. It contains the governor's palace, cathedral, a fine building of Byzantine architecture, and the prison. These are perched on the summit of a steep cliff, and approached by a narrow and winding, but drivable road. From here there is a splendid view of the Irtysh river and crescent-shaped city, which, though well and regularly laid out, consists for the most part of



TOBOLSK.

wooden buildings. The very streets are paved with planks, upon which the roll of wheels and clatter of hoofs produce, at a distance, a curious effect. From the citadel it sounded like the incessant beating of drums, the *vacarme* of *le régiment qui passe.* No care is taken to keep the roadway in repair. It is a common occurrence to find a hole two or three feet deep in the very centre of the roadway, where the timber has rotted away. Tobolsk is, therefore, not a desirable place for night excursions on wheels, for, save on moonlight nights, the lower town is in almost total darkness after sunset.

Tobolsk is very unhealthy, owing to the proximity of large stagnant marshes, productive of fever and miasma. The winters are severe, the summers dull and rainy, the sun seldom being seen at any season. It is the most cheerless, depressing place in Western Siberia. Many prisoners say they would prefer ten years at the mines to two here, although it is so much nearer European Russia.

The population of this city is estimated at

about twenty-five thousand, composed mainly of Russians and Germans, with a sprinkling of Tartars. Leather, tallow, and soap are manufactured, but of industries only boat-building is carried on to any great extent. Trade is almost stagnant. The city, however, must always retain a certain amount of commercial importance, owing to its position at the junction of the two great river highways, from Tomsk, on the Obi, and Omsk and Semipalatinsk, on the Irtysh, to Tiumen.

If Lucerne has its "lion" and Berne its "bears," the stranger is never for an instant permitted to forget that Tobolsk rejoices in its "bell." From the moment of landing he is pursued by a mob of pedlars with sleeve-links, cigarette-cases, baskets, walking-sticks, and every imaginable and useless article fashioned in wicker, wood, or ivory to represent the celebrated "Bell of Ouglitch," which, for giving the signal for an insurrection, was banished to Siberia by the Czar Boris Godouroff in 1591. It was the custom in those days to flog Siberian exiles, and occasionally tear out their nostrils with red-hot pincers.

In the case of the bell, there was some difficulty about this. But Boris was evidently of a facetious and ingenious disposition, for the metal prisoner, after being publicly flogged with rods, had, *faute de mieux*, one of its ears broken off. It is now suspended by the remaining one, in the citadel belfry at Tobolsk. Its tone is still sweetly clear and musical.*

A curious discovery was made here in 1862. While excavating in the lower town some workmen came upon several large subterranean passages running in all directions, and obstructed every fifty yards or so by massive iron gates. The news was at once telegraphed to St. Petersburg, when, to the general surprise, an order came back to close up the place at once. The existence of the tunnels, therefore, remains a mystery to all but state officials. The fact that the galleries are driven only under the lower town points to the probability of their having been made by some former Czar, to be used as mines in case of a revolt.

* This bell has since been placed in the Tobolsk Museum.

Near the citadel are the pleasure-gardens—a sad misnomer; for here, as in other Siberian towns, flowers are conspicuous only by their absence. Some stunted birch and cedar trees, some drooping, dejected-looking shrubs, intersected by weedy untended paths, ankle-deep in water after rain, a few rickety wooden benches, and a dilapidated *kiosk* of the same material, where on fine summer evenings a military band is *supposed* to play (I have never heard one here, or anywhere else east of the Ourals)—such is a public garden in Siberia. In the centre of this one stands a small stone obelisk. On it is inscribed in gold letters, cut into the stone: "To Yermak, conqueror of Siberia, 1581–1584."

To-night the gardens are, as usual, deserted save by a lonely female in black, who, regardless of damp and an extremely uncomfortable and insecure seat, is gazing, "remote, unfriended, and solitary," at the moon. I address her, casually observing in Russian that it is a fine evening. She answers in the purest French, and no wonder, for she is *Parisienne.* How strange and out of

place the clear musical accent sounds with these dismal surroundings! The lady, I find, has come to Tobolsk to instruct the youthful olive branches of a wealthy tallow-merchant. She has been here three months, but another, she says, will drive her mad. I can quite believe it.

I have already said that my object was to reach Tomsk unexpectedly. I did not therefore visit the prisons at Tobolsk, or even the barge towed by the *Kosagofski*, till the day after leaving the latter city, when (there being no telegraph) communication with Tomsk became impossible. The stringency of Russian police regulations is much exaggerated in England. My passport was never once asked for from the day I left Moscow till I entered the gates of the Tomsk Forwarding Prison, for the simple reason that I did not stay the night in any one place. Passports are seldom examined *en voyage*, but only when a traveller takes up his residence—be it only for a night—in a town or village. His papers are then taken away by the police, and, until they are returned, he is virtually a prisoner.

Although I am unable, for the reason above stated, to relate any personal experiences as regards the Tobolsk prisons, the account given by the Rev. H. Lansdell of his inspection of them in 1879 cannot fail to be of interest.* He says, speaking of the principal prison—

"On the road we had heard it spoken of as a place of considerable severity, in which were kept those condemned to *travaux forcés*. On entering, therefore, I braced my nerves for such horrors as might present themselves. . . . The buildings were large and of brick, with double windows to keep out the cold; and I noticed that, in addition to a pillow and covering, mattresses stuffed with old clothes were also provided for the prisoners. . . . They had a few books, and as one man only in ten could read, it was usual during the evenings for these to read aloud to their less instructed fellows. . . . The guard-room for the military was furnished much the same as the prisoners' rooms. . . . In the first prison were

* See "Through Siberia," by Henry Lansdell, D.D., F.R.G.S., pp. 113, 114.

nine single cells, in one of which was a Polish doctor, a political offender, who had surrounded himself with such small comforts as Polish books, eau de Cologne, and cigarettes, which last he (by way of privilege) was allowed to smoke.

"After marching through room after room, corridor after corridor, now across yards with prisoners lolling about, and now through sleeping apartments where some were not even up, though breakfast time had long gone by, I began to wonder where the work was going on, and asked to be shown the labours of those condemned to *travaux forcés;* upon which we were taken first into a room for wheelwrights, and next into a blacksmith's shop. There we were introduced to a company of tailors and another of shoemakers, and last of all we saw a room fitted for joiner's or cabinet-maker's work. The amount of labour going on appeared to be exceedingly small, and the number of men employed (or apparently that could be employed) to be only a sprinkling of the 732 inmates in prisons Nos. 1 and 3, and 264 in prison No. 2. I believe

some reason was given why more were not at work, though whether it was a holiday or bathing day, or what, I forget; but I came to the conclusion that they had not appliances enough to find occupation for a thousand prisoners, and that one need not have come to Siberia to see the severity of a hard-labour prison, since the same might just as easily have been witnessed in Europe. Had I entered with any of the curiosity that takes people to the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's, such curiosity would have remained ungratified. The prisons of Tobolsk reminded one most of those I had seen in Vienna and Cracow, in which, however, in some respects a comparison would result in favour of Siberia."

I * would draw attention to the fact that the above description of the Tobolsk penal establishments was written at least ten years ago, since

* Mr. George Kennan, who has given in the *Century Magazine* such minute accounts of the prisons of Tomsk and Tiumen, has little to say concerning those of Tobolsk. He writes: "In the course of the next day I made, under the guidance of the chief of police, a very superficial examination of two convict prisons, but did not find much in them that was of interest."

which the principal prisons of Western Siberia have been enlarged, and considerable improvements have taken place in the sanitary arrangements. I may also add that I quite share Mr. Lansdell's opinion that want of employment is the Siberian convict's chief (if not only) grievance.

Nine o'clock was striking as I left the citadel. The lower town was now invisible, for a dense white mist lay, like a huge lake, at my feet, concealing the streets and houses. Damp and malaria render Tobolsk very unhealthy at certain seasons—especially spring and autumn, when the mortality is usually very high in proportion to that of other Siberian towns.

What with fog and darkness, to find the steamer was easier said than done. I should probably have been left stranded, had not good luck thrown me in the way of a fellow-passenger, who, like myself, had for some time been unsuccessfully groping his way about the dark, sloppy streets. Although so early, not a light was visible. The population had apparently retired for the night. The situation was rapidly

becoming unpleasant, for the *Kosagofski* was to leave punctually at 9.30, and it could not now be many minutes off that hour.

Suddenly a sound of singing, or, to speak more correctly, wailing, was borne to us on the night air; the voices of men, women, and children, joining in a kind of chant or lament in the minor key. There was no time or rhythm about the melody, which, notwithstanding, possessed a weird beauty of its own, utterly unlike anything that I had ever heard, and which so fascinated me that I forgot all about the steamer, and stood rooted to the spot. "Come, my friend," said my companion; "have you never heard the 'Miloserdnaya'* before? Follow me. We are all right now; those are some of our ostrojniks† they are landing."

Guided by the sound, we presently emerged upon the quay, where some fifty or sixty grey-clad male and female prisoners were drawn up

* The "Charity Song," sung by every convict gang as it marches through a village or town in Siberia.

† Prisoners.

by the landing stage. As we approached, the last notes of the prison song died away, and the roll was called, preparatory to marching off to the prison.

There was plenty of time to spare. The officer in command of the barge was seated in the roadway, at a small wooden table littered with official documents, which he was checking by the dim light of a horn lantern, discussing meanwhile a glass of tea and cigarette, with apparently not the slightest intention of hurrying himself. Captain Galtine had exchanged his military tunic for a tweed shooting jacket, to which was sewn a pair of gold shoulder-straps (this dress is universal among convoy officers in Siberia), and wore a white linen forage-cap and sword.

It was a strange scene. Now and again the clank of a chain broke the stillness—but not often—for half a dozen, at most, of the prisoners wore irons. Ten or twelve telegas stood by, ready to receive the sick or ailing. The roll-call was about half through, when a strapping young fellow, with sunburnt face and merry, twinkling

eyes, limped up to the table. He was evidently a wag. His companions tittered.

"What is the matter?" said the captain.

"Please, your Excellency, it hurts me to walk," said the boy, pointing to his foot, with a woe-begone but ludicrous expression on his face that made Galtine smile.

"Your name?"

"Dimitri Snazine, of Nijni-Novgorod."

"What is your sentence?"

"Tobolsk, Excellency. Two years."

One of the escort soldiers here interposed:

"He is all right, Excellency. He was sky-larking all over the place this morning."

"Silence," was the answer. "Let him be examined."

Dimitri had, sure enough, an angry-looking sore on the right instep.

"Put the lad in a telega," said Captain Galtine sternly; "and you" (to the Cossack, who looked excessively foolish), "don't you be so officious in future."

It was past ten o'clock before the *cortége* moved

off, the telegas, with the sick and baggage, bringing up the rear of the procession. One of the former, a gentleman-like looking man of about forty years of age, was in the last stage of consumption. "It would have been far more merciful to let him die at Moscow," said one of the escort, who lifted him into the cart with the care and tenderness of a woman. "Poor fellow! he is insensible now." The man was, I found, condemned to five years' imprisonment for forgery. As they left the quay the prisoners again took up the "Miloserdnaya," which, after the sight I had just witnessed, made me lonely and depressed. The sad, plaintive air rang in my ears for days, and my dreams were haunted, for many nights, by the white and ghastly features of the poor consumptive exile.

Our first-class passengers now numbered about a dozen—all, with one exception, Siberians, born and bred. They are a strange people, these Asiatic subjects of the Czar. An English traveller has described them as "civilized savages," and with reason. Culture, refinement,

and politeness are the attributes of every true Russian. Cross the Ourals, and you will find their direct antithesis, even amongst the highest in the land. The commonest courtesies of every-day life are unknown, save, perhaps, that of bowing and shaking hands. These ceremonies are gone through on every possible occasion, even on rising from a meal, but the individual who insists on these forms will not scruple the next instant to blow his nose in his fingers, spit on the carpet, and ask you why you don't wear better clothes!

Siberian men are, as a rule, arrogant and vulgar. They have generally but one topic of conversation—money; but two amusements—gambling and drink. The fair sex interest them but little. Books of any kind are unknown to them. European newspapers they never see, nor indeed want to see. Talk to them of the Triple Alliance, and they will ask you how much you paid for your boots. The women are, perhaps, a degree better intellectually, if not in manners, for they do occasionally read. Zola and Paul de Kock (translated into Russian) are the favourite

authors in most Siberian cities, which circumstance does not tend to improve the mind or morals of the female population. I do not, however, go so far as to say (in the words of a French traveller) that "the plain ones are *gauche* and rude; the pretty ones, with few exceptions, mercenary and immoral."

It is common enough, in the larger Siberian towns, to meet men with ten or twelve thousand pounds a year—lucky speculators (some of them exiles) in mining operations. Some of the larger gold-workers are actually millionaires. One of the latter, Mr. S——, is, with his wife and family, on board the *Kosagofski*, returning to his palatial residence at Irkoutsk after a protracted tour in Europe. Mr. S——, a stout, apoplectic-looking little man of about fifty, is possessed of a fortune estimated at fifteen million roubles. Mrs. S —— is thirty years old, vulgar but good tempered, with a perpetual and vacuous smile. She is attired in the latest French fashion, but looks dirty and badly dressed. The family consists of an odious boy, aged ten, with a Russian tutor, and

a pretty little girl two years younger, in the care of a French governess, a thin, delicate woman, now visiting Siberia for the first time. Poor mademoiselle! How I pitied her!

The strange manners and customs of the S—— family would have afforded me intense amusement had it not been for this poor lady, who, fresh from the comforts and cleanliness of civilized life, must have felt her position keenly, but who, nevertheless, managed to preserve an unmoved, if not cheerful demeanour, at the ghoul-like feasts at which she was compelled to assist. Siberians have no fixed hours, save those for the midday siesta from two till four o'clock. Meals are taken anyhow—sometimes in the day-time, sometimes in the middle of the night. It was always a source of wonder to me how each individual member of this strange family circle managed to be hungry at the right time. I frequently caught poor mademoiselle surreptitiously devouring nuts and sweetmeats on deck, while the tutor resorted to vodka as a stop-gap, once or twice with painful results.

The following is a specimen of one of the dinners partaken of by this Siberian Vanderbilt and his household. Time, 10.30 p.m. We have just left Tobolsk. Madame S—— has been ashore, and returned with several baskets full of nuts and wild berries, the shells and skins of which have been strewn by her offspring all over the floor and seats of the saloon. Enter Mr. S——. "I suppose we ought to eat something. I am getting hungry."

Madame. "Yes, we have had nothing to-day. What shall we have?"

"Oh, eggs, I suppose. By the way, did we finish that salt fish yesterday?"

Madame thereupon dives into her cabin, and returns with a huge piece of the article in question, oily, ill-smelling, and wrapped, together with a wedge of mouldy cheese, in a dirty piece of newspaper. The steward produces a loaf of bread, and dinner commences. Tea is ordered and consumed by the gallon, but no food of any kind, although meat, fish, and game are to be had at absurdly low prices. Poor mademoiselle looks

so longingly at my veal cutlet that I have not the heart to finish it. An hour later, I return to the saloon and find the entire family engrossed in cards. Even the children, half asleep, are playing—the boy with his tutor, the little girl with unhappy mademoiselle, who looks thinner and hungrier than ever.

The other passengers were what Americans would call a very "mixed crowd." A doctor from Irkoutsk, with his wife and a graduated scale of seven olive branches (even now madame looked anything but fit to embark on a rough tarantass journey of several hundred miles!); a patriarchal-looking old gentleman, with whom (and two unwashed but genial students from Tomsk University) I shared the sleeping saloon; and, last, but not least, a young and good-looking Polish lady travelling alone, whose object in coming to these wilds was, for many days, a mystery. Pretty Madame L——! In your neat grey home-spun gown, long suède gloves, and smart tan shoes, who would ever have taken *you* for a Siberian exile!

My friend the tutor, who was one of an inquiring disposition, gradually wormed out the *dossier* of all. The patriarch was not so venerable as he looked. He had been mayor of Tomsk—a position he had lately somewhat compromised by an enforced sojourn of twelve months in the Goubernski Prison of that city for embezzlement and adulteration of spirits. He was now returning from a trip to Europe, where he had been to "let the thing blow over."

"I do not suppose he will be reinstated," said my informant; "but his social position will not be affected in the least."

The ex-mayor was a cheery, good-tempered old rascal, and a pleasant companion enough, but for a detestable habit of snoring, without intermission, throughout the night. Prison life had evidently not injured *his* nerves.

It was not till nearly the end of the voyage that the pretty Pole made me her confidant, and confessed that she was on her way to Krasnoyarsk (a town east of Tomsk) to join her husband, a Russian, who had been banished for five years

for publishing a seditious pamphlet in Warsaw. Madame L—— kept aloof throughout from our other passengers. While the latter were below in the stuffy saloon, wrangling over the card tables, my little friend would ensconce herself, with many rugs and pillows, in a comfortable deck-chair, and, immersed in the pages of a yellow French novel, seem utterly lost to her surroundings. A few words in French (a language she spoke perfectly) made us, the day after leaving Tobolsk, the best of friends, and we had many a talk over the strange ways of this strange land, and the lonely life on which she was entering. "For lonely it will assuredly be," she would say with tears in her big blue eyes. "How can any one associate with such dreadful people as these? Thank Heaven, I shall have my piano, my books, and my dogs; my husband says that our house can be made very pretty. After all, it is only for five years, and—who knows?—he may be pardoned before then, and we shall be able to return to dear Poland. If he had only let those cursed politics alone!" she would add,

clenching her little white hands with uncontrollable passion at the thought that her husband's folly had spoilt five of the most precious years in a woman's life.

The long summer days slip pleasantly by as we paddle lazily down the blue Irtysh, past pretty sunlit villages, golden corn-fields, and fertile pasture land—the great black barge gliding swiftly and silently along in our wake. The sky is cloudless, the fresh grass and flower-scented breeze delicious and invigorating. The monotonous rush of the stream against the bows has a soothing effect, and we are beginning to realize, under the influence of lunch, tobacco, and, last, but not least, pleasant female society, that Siberia is not such a bad place after all, when—crash! and we are ashore with barely three feet of water under the bows, while the clumsy prison hulk, still afloat, comes flying down stream, and looks unpleasantly like running us down. The incident affords much amusement to the occupants of the cage, who, in a state of the wildest excitement, clamber about the wires like monkeys,

and seem to enjoy the dismay of our passengers as the floating prison grates past the paddle-boxes with an ominous sound of splintering wood. Captain Gâltine's dishevelled head, evidently fresh



CAPTAIN GALTINE.

from a siesta, appears at his cabin window. From the confusion and hubbub he may well imagine a mutiny has broken out. Many of the convicts have, for coolness, divested themselves of the long grey cloak and lounge about the deck barefooted,

in shirt and trousers. Half a dozen or so are smoking, though a sentry stands by. In the women's compartment are many children, flaxen-haired, blue-eyed brats, who laugh and wave their hands in "adieu" as, after a few moments' delay, the *Kosagofski* slowly forges ahead, and the barge drops astern again.

Stations are few and far between on the Irtysh and Obi rivers. There are but eight of any importance, the whole distance of eighteen hundred miles between Tiumen and Tomsk, where passengers and mails are landed and embarked, and where wood fuel is taken on board. The mails were landed at the smaller villages in a somewhat primitive fashion. The steamer was steered inshore as far as possible, a red flag waved, and the letters, secured in a glass bottle attached to a long stick, flung into the stream. Almost simultaneously a fleet of small boats would put out from shore to "catch the mail"! There was "no delivery" at night!

Towards evening on the 25th of August we reached Samárof, a pretty village clustering round

a picturesque church spire, at the foot of a well-wooded hill. This is a great game country. Large flocks of geese and wild duck are continually seen, and the forest on either side of the village is intersected by narrow páths (or rides, as they are called in England) for the pursuit of elk, deer, wild boar, etc., which abound in the neighbourhood. Samárof is only twenty versts or so from the junction of the Irtysh and Obi. It is evident that we are nearing the great river, for just beyond here the stream widens till it presents the appearance of a huge lake, thickly studded with an archipelago of marshy islands, densely covered with willow and birch trees. Navigation here is anything but easy, even in clear weather. During a fog it is almost impossible, for the steamer has to thread her way through some hundreds of these islets, along channels in some cases not fifty yards across.

My first impressions of the Obi are not favourable, for the warm sunny weather of the past few days has been succeeded by an icy cold wind

and pouring rain. The scenery is indeed a contrast to that of yesterday. Long dreary stretches of yellow sand on either side of the grey river, flecked with white wavelets; inland, a few stunted birch and willow trees, sparse withered herbage, a pool of black stagnant water, and half a dozen grimy tents—an Ostiak encampment; over all a leaden sky, splashed with flakes of white cloud flying before the gale; —such is the outlook through a veil of mist and driving rain from the cabin window at dawn, such the outlook (with the exception of tents and trees) at sunset. Vegetation has almost entirely ceased. There is nothing around us but sand, varied by an occasional salt swamp. Gazing from the deck over the bleak dreary expanse, one may well realize the words of the poet:

> "Miles, on miles, on miles, of desolation,
> Leagues, on leagues, on leagues, without a change;
> Sign or token of some elder nation
> Which would make this strange land seem less strange."

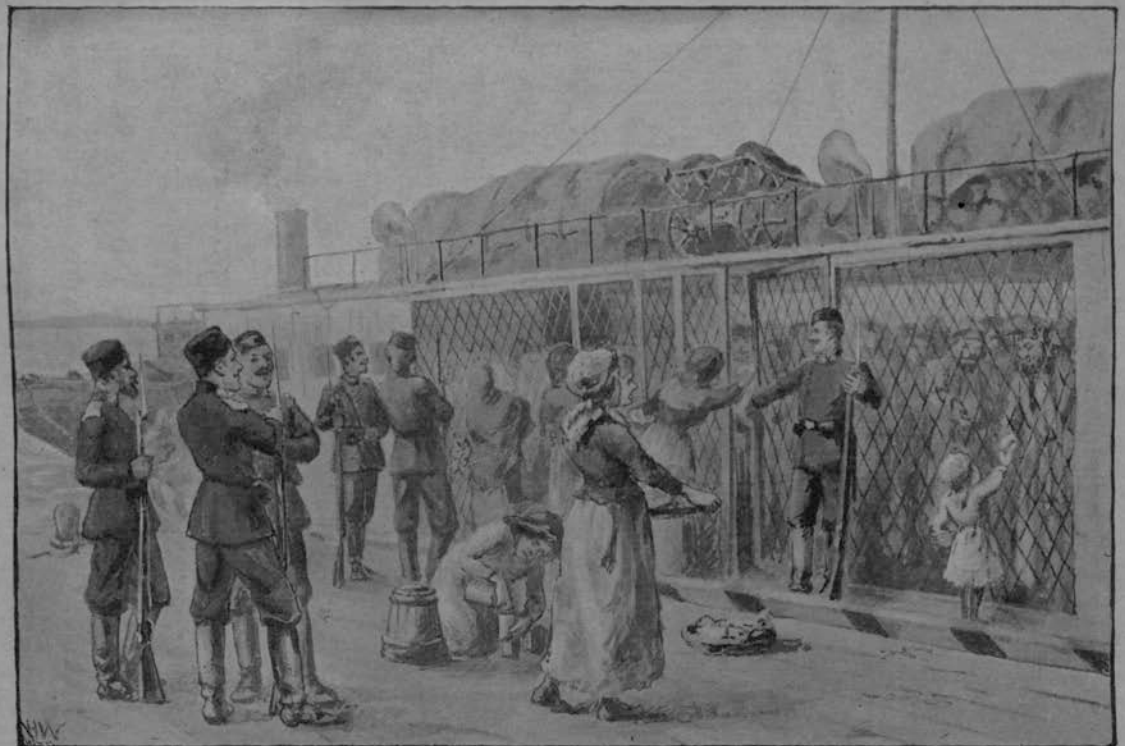
But we have reached our northernmost point, and the scenery will improve, says the captain,

with every mile we travel southwards. "A river three thousand miles long cannot *all* be beautiful," he adds apologetically.

By midday we are off Sourgout. This town, although it figures largely in the Russian maps, and is looked upon by the Ostiaks as their "capital," is a miserable place. It consists chiefly of dilapidated wooden huts, inhabited by a population of under twelve hundred souls. The *Kosagofski* is to remain here two hours, which will give me ample time for a careful inspection inside and out of the prison ship. It is still pouring in torrents. Protected by a mackintosh and a stout pair of porpoise-hide boots, and armed with a "kodak," I plunge boldly into the morass of black mud that separates the steamer from the barge, and am presently alongside. My fellow-passengers, their noses flattened against the saloon windows, evidently look upon me as a harmless lunatic; but on my return I am regarded with suspicion by all, save, perhaps, my little Polish friend. Even she, however, cannot understand why I take such interest in *ces sales forcats.*

In his interesting work, "Through Siberia," Dr. Lansdell relates how the first sight of a Russian convict barge filled him with melancholy and compassion "for the many heavy hearts that were being tugged along further and further from the dear place called home." Dr. Lansdell, however, soon changed his opinion, for he adds in the very next sentence, "But such thoughts received little enlargement at the halting-place, when the barge was drawn up to the bank; for the hilarity thereon of men, women, and children was much more noisy than that of the free people on the steamer. One might have thought that the convicts were having a good time of it."

This indeed is the case at Sourgout, for the gloomy day and steady, relentless downpour seem to have little or no effect on the spirits of the prisoners. Men and women are as usual bartering, chaffing, and laughing with the market women from the adjacent town. The decks of the barge are, notwithstanding the rain, spread with snowy linen clothes and baskets, containing



THE IRTYSH PRISON-BARGE.

tea, cigarettes, "agourtsi," * cream cheeses, sausages, and "kalatchi." I stand for a while to watch the busy scene, and am somewhat surprised to see many of the convicts produce rolls of rouble notes in payment. But though the shouting and laughter might well be heard half a mile away, there is no ill temper, bullying, or fighting. The demeanour of the exiles more resembles that of a picnic party than a convict gang.

I particularly notice one old man who slowly elbowed his way to the side of the cage and bought, after a good deal of haggling, a "kalatch," a cream cheese, and a huge sausage, which latter the vendor tried in vain to squeeze through the wires. The poor old fellow's face was the picture of misery as his purchase was pressed and pounded into a shapeless mass against the unyielding iron. But the attention of one of the escort soldiers was drawn to the incident. Hailing a companion off duty, he at once sent him to the rescue, and the savoury morsel was taken round to its owner without

* Pickled cucumber.

further injury. The action of the guard was purely voluntary, and, to my mind, spoke volumes.

Time is precious. Crossing, with some difficulty, the slippery unrailed plank, I step on to the deck of the barge, and, presenting my card and credentials to the sentry (who evidently regards my "kodak" with suspicion), I light a cigarette and await the arrival of Captain Galtine.

The convoy commander, a man about forty years old, looked, though *en deshabille*, a soldier and a gentleman. "Excuse my costume," he said politely, in good French, when we had exchanged greetings; "but I do not wear uniform here as a rule, excepting amongst the prisoners. If you will come with me for a few moments I will dress and take you over the barge. My people will have finished their marketing by that time, and you will have a better opportunity of seeing, and, if you so please, conversing with them, for it will be the dinner hour. You are before your time, are you not?" added Galtine,

ushering me into a light, cheerful cabin, all cretonne and French prints. "They told me at Tobolsk that you were not expected for a month at least."

Producing a bottle of vodka and some cigarettes, my host then disappears into an adjoining cabin, from which he presently emerges, clad in a neat dark-green uniform with gold facings. "Now," says he, buckling on a sword, "I am ready. Smoking is permitted," he adds, with a smile, seeing that I am about to throw away my "papiroska." "But you need not be alarmed; we have no fever."

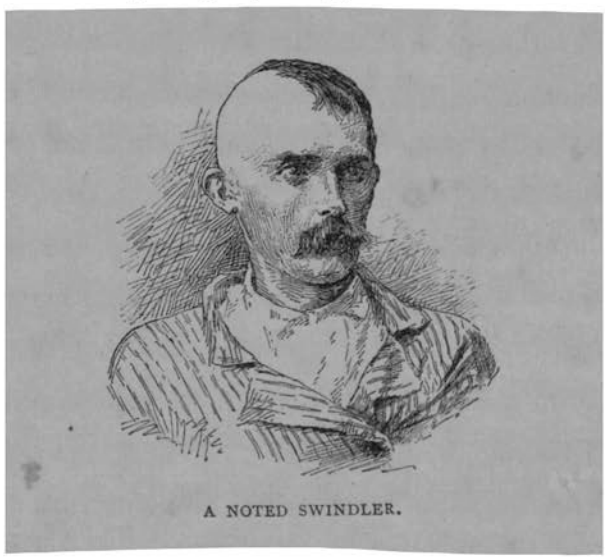
The *Irtysh* prison-barge is about two hundred and fifty feet long by thirty feet beam, and is constructed to carry eight hundred convicts of all denominations, and twenty-two guards, including the commander of the convoy. As I have already remarked, these craft are all built on the same model; the hull of iron, painted black, the deck-houses of a brownish yellow. There are two of the latter, fore and aft—one containing cabins for the convoy commander, the doctor,

guards, and a few political or privileged prisoners; the other an infirmary (with separate wards for men and women) and a dispensary. The space between these (about eighty feet long by twenty-six feet beam) is occupied by a large cage about thirteen feet high, the roof of which is formed by a platform or upper deck, the sides composed of heavy iron network. This cage is divided (also by iron network) into two compartments of equal size; one occupied by men, the other by women and children. A companion-ladder leads from each to the kameras, or sleeping quarters below, where, it is almost needless to add, the sexes are also separated.

Accompanied by the doctor and a couple of guards (unarmed save for side-arms), Galtine and I started on our tour of inspection. The doctor, a young, delicate-looking man, had taken a diploma in Paris and spoke French fluently. He informed me that prison gangs are only accompanied by medical men during the river transit through Siberia. Cases of sickness on the road are left for treatment at the first convenient

hospital or *étape* infirmary. Neither do surgeons accompany prisoners on railway journeys; but the trains are furnished with dispensaries, in case of urgent need of medical assistance.

A narrow passage (through the centre of the



A NOTED SWINDLER.

deck-house) led from the captain's quarters to the women's cage. The door, guarded day and night by an armed sentry, was of open work, heavily padlocked. Twenty or thirty women of various ages were standing or sitting about the deck in groups; some of them in ordinary peasant dress,

the remainder in prison costume of grey frieze, and a kind of turban of white linen. Many wore warm woollen gloves, while all had stout high boots reaching to the knee. The place was full of children, from babies at the breast upwards. The majority of the women were of a certain age, and rather plain than attractive; but amongst the voluntary exiles, or those accompanying their relatives of their own free will, were some pretty girlish faces. One of the latter was carrying on a flirtation with a good-looking young convict in the men's cage, their hands clasped through the wire network. Our approach did not disturb them in the least. "Love laughs at locksmiths," said Galtine, with a smile.

Entering a second grille, also heavily padlocked, in the iron partition, we now passed into the men's cage. Our appearance was the signal for a deafening shout of welcome from the convicts, who uncovered as they wished us "Good day."

"Go on with your dinners, boys," cried Galtine.

The marketing was over, and the midday meal

had commenced. At one end of the cage two prisoners at a galley were ladling out basins of thick savoury-smelling soup, which each man, as he received it, either carried below or ate where he stood. Here, as at Moscow, the varied types were striking—Jews, Tartars, Circassians, Turks, Armenians, Finns, even to a yellow-complexioned, beady-eyed Samoyede from the Arctic regions. The majority, however, were of the peasant class, from European Russia. All were, without exception, well and warmly clothed and shod. Perhaps fifty in all wore light leg-irons; but many more had their heads half shaven, to show that, for some unusually grave offence, they had lost all common and civil rights.

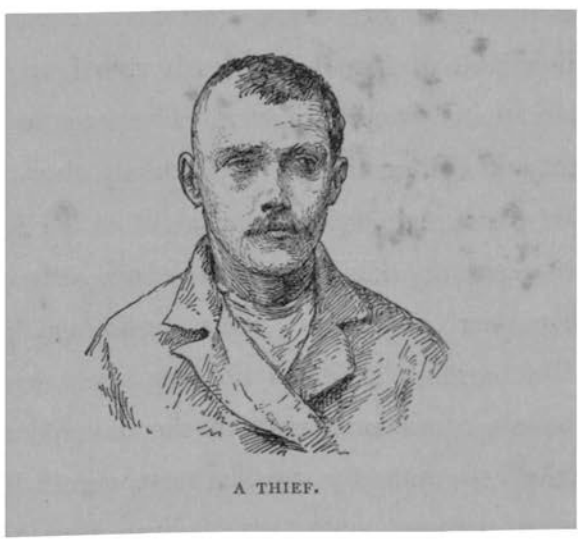
"Come and taste the soup," said Galtine, as he led me to a group seated in a far corner. Spread out on the deck in front of them were a huge loaf of black bread, a couple of cream cheeses, a box of sardines, some "kalatchi," and a packet of tea, the purchases of the morning. Noticing several of these groups around, I inquired the reason, and found that it is customary

to form messes, on the march, of eight to a dozen men; one being appointed cash-holder and caterer for the rest.

"Will you spare the barin a mouthful?" said Galtine to a blue-eyed, effeminate-looking lad, who at once jumped to his feet and handed me his dinner. The soup was fairly strong and palatable, though rather greasy. It contained some large but rather tough pieces of meat, barley, and cabbage. Returning the bowl, I noticed that the lad's head was half shaven, and afterwards found that he was sentenced to fifteen years' hard labour at the mines for the murder of his mother and two sisters while they slept. There was no motive for the crime. On being asked why he had committed it, the cold-blooded young ruffian replied, "I wanted to try my luck in Siberia. That's the place to make your fortune."

The *Irtysh* has on board 773 prisoners all told. It would not be very surprising if, with such numbers, the sleeping cabins, at any rate, became, at times, oppressive. But although the

latter are, by order of the captain, fully occupied when we visit them, I find them free from smell, light, and airy. The ports are large, with movable glass windows, while a continual current of pure air rushes down the air-shafts and wide companion stairway.



A THIEF.

"We are at anchor now," observes one of the guards; "*en route* it is much cooler."

The escort consists of only nineteen Cossacks, two of whom are on the sick list. "What would happen in the event of mutiny?" I ask Galtine, who laughs and shrugs his shoulders. "Cela

n'arrive jamais," he says. This somewhat tallies with Kamorski's remark in St. Petersburg: "Les mal traiter? Comment donc? Nous serions bien vite assassinés!"

Down the centre and sides of the kamera are sloping wooden sleeping platforms similar to those described in the Tomsk Peresilni. Each man's pillow and greatcoat are neatly rolled up at the head of his sleeping-place. The walls are of a light buff colour, the decks spotlessly clean. The place, in short, reminds one more of an English barrack-room than a prison, and although I subsequently inspected every nook and corner of the barge, and visited her, on seven or eight occasions, at various hours of the day and night, I failed to discover the slightest defect in the sanitary arrangements, or smallest approach to an offensive smell. The hospital cabins, being on deck, were even better ventilated than the public kameras. In one of them a mother was nursing a sick child, a pretty little girl of seven or eight years old. Her story was a sad one. The husband was on his way to the mines for

life for a criminal offence, while her younger daughter, barely able to walk, had died since leaving Moscow. A table stood by the bedside, covered with phials and medicine bottles. Amongst them were a bunch of wild flowers and a doll, a strange and touching contrast to the melancholy surroundings of the place.

The cabins on the *Irtysh* for the confinement of political offenders can scarcely be called cells. They are four in number, of the same dimensions as the commander's quarters, with a large barred window freely admitting light and air. Only one was occupied. As we entered, the inmate, a surly-looking youth in student's dress, rose to his feet, a lighted cigarette in his hand. The furniture, though rough, was adequate. A camp bedstead, with mattress and pillow, a cane bottomed chair, small cupboard, and a deal table covered with books, but no writing materials. I opened one of the former. It was a Russian translation of "Pickwick."

"An amusing book," I remarked; but the only reply was a sulky stare.

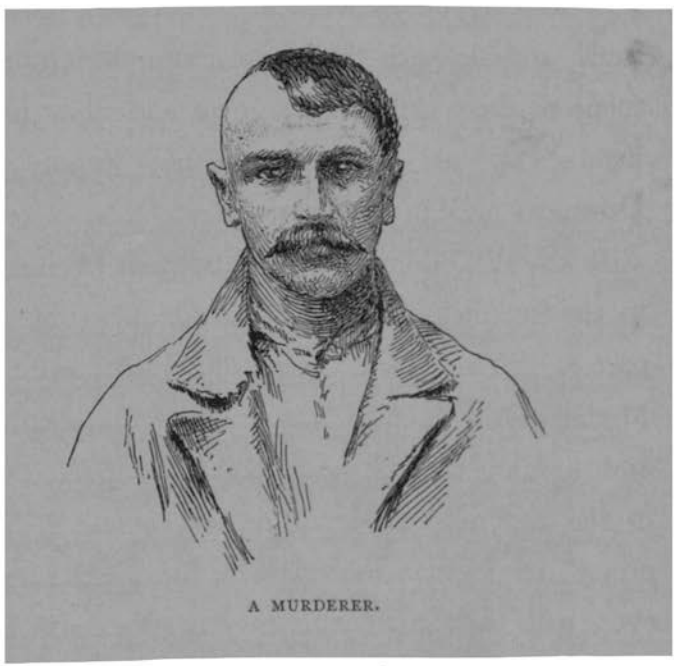
"You would sooner have 'Tchto dielat,'* my friend, wouldn't you?" said Galtine, as we left the cabin.

I afterwards conversed with this prisoner at some length, and discovered that I had, on first acquaintance, mistaken shyness for ill temper; for when the former had worn off he was only too glad to receive me, and give me all the information I required. L. V—— was about twenty-three years of age, and a student of the university of Kazan. He had, while on a visit to St. Petersburg a year before, become acquainted with some prominent members of the revolutionary party, who persuaded him, on his return to Kazan, to "work for the cause" among the peasantry of that district. Young, impulsive, and inexperienced, he was soon under "police surveillance," then arrested, and finally tried and sentenced to three years' banishment at Tomsk.

As regards his treatment since arrest, L. V—— said he had nothing to complain of. The food,

* A Socialist work suppressed in Russia.

both in prison and on board the *Irtysh*, was good and sufficient; tea and cigarettes were allowed *ad lib.*, so long as they were paid for, while the guards, if somewhat rough, were kindly. The deprivation of pens, ink, and paper seemed to



A MURDERER.

be L. V——'s greatest punishment. At the expiration of six months, however, these would be permitted.

My "kodak" created a great sensation on the barge. First, Galtine insisted on being taken,

and was somewhat disappointed to hear that until it appeared in these pages, he would not be able to see the negative. I managed to photograph three or four good heads amongst the male convicts, and one or two among the best looking of the women. The latter took as much trouble with their poses, and the arrangement of their grey prison gown and white linen head-dress, as any professional beauty at Downey's or Van de Weyde's.

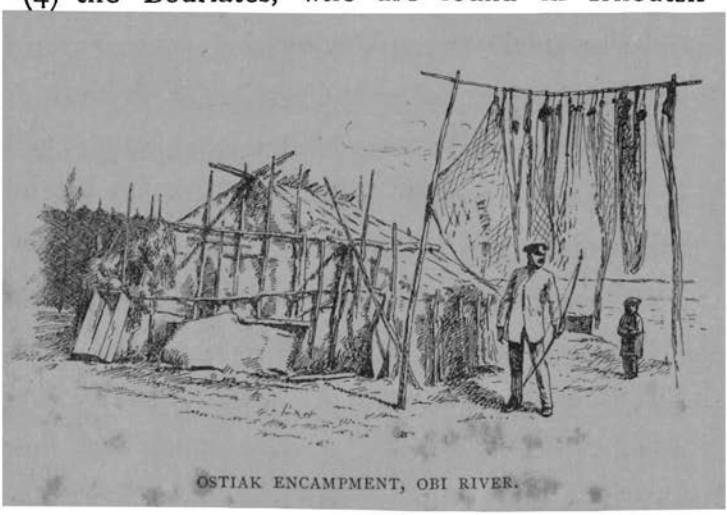
It was still pouring in torrents when I returned to the steamer. She was on the point of departure. The decks were deserted save by Madame L——, who was braving the weather and battling against wind and rain, muffled up in the captain's oil-skins and sou'-wester. The pretty little woman looked more like a child than ever, with her curly auburn hair, loosened by the gale, blowing wildly about her baby features and laughing blue eyes. "Don't come near me," she cried, raising her hands in feigned alarm, as I approached. "You have been with those horrid convicts, who carry about typhus and

smallpox. Seriously, now, how can you go into such filthy dens?" Her words set me thinking. If even the Czar's subjects themselves are unaware of the good management and cleanliness of most of their prisons, it is scarcely surprising that such ignorance concerning the Russian penal system should exist in England.

Although we were again favoured with bright sunny weather, the scenery for two days after leaving Sourgout continued bleak and desolate. Villages, or rather wood stations, are few and far between, though we occasionally passed encampments of Ostiaks, a tribe inhabiting this district. A brief description here of the aboriginal inhabitants of this great country may not be without interest to the reader.

The native races of Siberia are, roughly speaking, six in number: (1) the Samoyedes, who inhabit the shore of the frozen ocean from Archangel in Europe, to the Lena river in Eastern Siberia; (2) the Yakoutes, natives of a

huge tract of country divided by the Lena, and bounded on the east by the Kolyma, on the west by the Yenisei river; (3) the Tongouses, wanderers over the mountainous regions, which extend from Lake Baikal to the Sea of Okhotzk; (4) the Bouriates, who are found in Irkoutsk



OSTIAK ENCAMPMENT, OBI RIVER.

and the Trans-Baikal province; (5) the Kamchatdales and Kuriles of the peninsula of Kamchatka; and, lastly, (6) the Ostiaks, the tribe already mentioned, inhabiting the country lying between the Obi and Yenisei rivers.

The Samoyedes, who number at most six thousand, and are rapidly decreasing in popu-

lation, have broad flat faces, thick lips, no beard, and long coarse black hair. Although diminutive in stature (rarely exceeding five feet three or four inches in height), they are stoutly built and very muscular. Many have adopted the dress of the Russian moujik, but some are still occasionally met with in their picturesque costume of bright-coloured cloth, beads, and furs. Their women are, although almost repulsive in appearance, extremely vain, especially of their hair, which they adorn with coins, pieces of metal, etc. On one occasion a traveller found a Samoyede lady who, amongst other bits of brass and iron, had interwoven her tresses with the lock of an old musket!

In religion the Samoyede is a Shaman, and frequently sacrifices to appease evil spirits. He lives principally upon fish, the produce of the chase, and the vast herds of wild reindeer that roam over his territory. Tame reindeer are made use of for draught purposes.

Although kindly and hospitable in other ways, the Samoyedes are diabolically cruel to their

women. There is probably no race in the world where the latter are so badly treated. To be *enceinte*, even legally, is considered a disgrace, and the wretched mothers are incessantly beaten and worried during pregnancy, and until their child is born. During this period, too, they are tortured until they confess with whom they have been unfaithful, often naming an entirely innocent person to escape further torments. The husband as a rule is not exacting, a small sum of money (or its equivalent in fur or brandy) being the usual price paid by the real or imaginary co-respondent. The name Samoyede is said to occur in the Russian chronicles as far back as the year 1096, and means literally "Salmon-eaters."

The Yakoutes inhabit a country nearly as large as Europe, with the exception of Russia. The population of this huge province is under two hundred and fifty thousand, and consists mainly of Yakoutes, with a sprinkling of Russians and Tongouses.

The town of Yakoutsk, which is situated on

the Lena river, contains at most five thousand souls. Most of the buildings are of wood, though there is a handsome stone cathedral, and the governor's house is of the same material. The town presents a queer patchwork appearance, European dwellings being mixed up pell-mell with native yourts. There are few places in Siberia more dreaded by exiles than Yakoutsk, which, over five thousand miles from St. Petersburg, bears the unpleasant reputation of being the hottest place in summer, the coldest in winter, in the world. Dense swarms of mosquitoes attack the inhabitants during summer, night and day, and deaths have occurred from the bites. There is, however, no criminal prison at Yakoutsk, while only the most dangerous political offenders are sent there.

The Yakoutes are low in stature, and of a light copper colour. They are a genial, hospitable race; but, although robust, and capable of going through great fatigue and privations (so much so that they are called in Siberia "men of iron"), the majority are timid, not to say cowardly in

disposition. As hunters, however, they are unrivalled, and from the Yakoutsk district are exported the most valuable furs in the country. Most of the latter are sent to Moscow and St. Petersburg, but a great number also find their way to China.

The Yakoutes, although they have large herds of cattle, prefer horseflesh to beef, rarely slaughtering oxen. Cattle are kept more for the sake of the milk they yield, and for riding purposes, than as an article of food, but milk is in large request, being supplied by mares as well as cows.

Reindeer flesh is only eaten on great occasions, or when an animal dies from natural causes, the staple food being a sort of cake, made of fir-tree bark, powdered very fine. I saw one of the latter at the Irkoutsk Museum, which, though four or five years old, still reeked of turpentine, and must when freshly baked have been somewhat trying even for the digestive powers of a Yakoute.

The winter dwellings are square in shape, and

made of logs protected by banks of earth which reach to the windows, which latter are made of blocks of solid ice. An idea of the lowness of the temperature may be gained by the fact that, notwithstanding the heat inside the hut, these seldom melt till the return of spring. Human beings, cows, calves, even reindeer, all live together inside these yourts for the sake of warmth. In summer the tents are of birch-bark and reindeer skin, of the same shape, but naturally much cooler than the winter quarters.

The Chaman religion is still practised by this race to a large extent. But very few Europeans have witnessed the strange, weird ceremonies performed by these Chamans, who worship a deity supposed to inhabit the sun. Their secret rites take place either in deep forests, or desolate tundras, or vast desert marshes, for none but the true Christian religion is recognized by the Imperial Government. A Russian fur trader, who succeeded in assisting unseen at one of these ceremonies some years ago, thus describes the scene :—

"The officiating priest appears as soon as a select body of worshippers is ready, and enters a circle of flaming logs which has been kindled in readiness. He is clad entirely in white. Round his neck is slung a large circular brass plate, signifying the sun, while from his shoulders, sides, and thighs hang numberless bells, and stuffed bodies of stoats, weasels, and other wild animals. Fitting him closely is a kind of light framework typifying the human body, a perfect iron skeleton, showing the ribs, breast-bones, legs, etc. Sacrifices of reindeer and calves' flesh, sable furs, fish, and arrack are then cast into the flames, while he turns slowly round and round inside the ring of fire, till, like a Cairo dervish, he has worked himself into a kind of mad frenzy. He then falls helpless in a fit of exhaustion brought on by excitement and exertion. This concludes the ceremony, which is unintelligible to any but a Chaman."

With the exception of small-pox, epidemics are rare in Yakoutsk. This disease, however, sometimes lays whole settlements waste, and

Russian traders sometimes come upon a Yakoute village deserted by every living being save dogs and reindeer, while the corpses of those who have succumbed to this loathsome disease lie rotting above ground. When a Yakoute is attacked, his companions leave him to his fate, with a cup of water and bundle of firewood within reach. This, curiously enough, is the practice of many of the inland tribes in Borneo. Indeed, in appearance and customs, the Yakoute, like the Ostiak, strikingly resembles the Dyak.

Perhaps the most curious fact in connection with this strange race is that a Yakoute would probably have little difficulty in making himself understood in the streets of Constantinople. Many Turkish and Yakoute words are so similar as to leave no doubt of the latter race's Turkish descent.* In support of this theory, Erman says: "It cannot by any means be maintained that the Yakoutes have received the better part of their civilization, at some time or other, from Mongolian neighbours; their names for the

* See Appendix E.

Deity, for iron and other metals, for their fishing gear, etc., are all pure Turkish, and they call the intoxicating drinks made from milk by the same name as the Turkish Tartars."

The Tongouses, who inhabit the region to the north and east of Yakoutsk, are known to Russians as the horse, dog, or reindeer Tongouses, according to their habits. They are perhaps the wildest, as they are the filthiest of any Siberian tribe, but, it should be added, are also the most picturesque, their dress of fur and birdskins being especially graceful and handsome.

Comparatively few in number (four or five thousand at most), the Tongouses are yearly diminishing. They are of medium height, and have active slender figures and a pleasant expression of features. Notwithstanding the latter, they do not create a favourable impression at first sight. In the words of the celebrated pedestrian traveller, Captain Cochrane, R.N., "They are filthy to an extreme, eating and drinking anything, however loathsome, and the effluvia of their persons is putridity itself."

The Tongouses, who profess no religion, are essentially nomads, rarely encamping for more than a few days in the same spot. Their dwellings are the same, summer and winter, and are made of reindeer skins, stretched tightly over a wooden framework. There are no apertures for light and air or the escape of smoke, which finds its way out as best it may. It is probably owing to this that the Tongouses, like the Mongols of the Gobi Desert, suffer a good deal from diseases of the eye. The interior of their yourts is almost unbearable to Europeans. It is curious to note that the yourts of all these tribes vary in shape; those of the Yakoutes being square, the Bouriates round, and the Tongouses conical, while those of the Ostiaks and Kamchatdales are triangular.

Honesty is the chief characteristic of the Tongouses. Robbery is looked upon as an unpardonable sin, and the convicted thief becomes an outcast for life. On the other hand, drunkenness and debauchery, introduced by Russian fur traders, reign paramount, and gluttony is the Tongouse's second nature. Apropos of the latter,

the following anecdote, related by Mr. Bush, is quoted in "Frozen Asia":—

"I had heard large stories concerning the eating powers of these northern natives, but had up to this time been disposed to doubt many of them. This night we witnessed one of their *moderate meals*, which caused all my former scepticism to vanish.

"After pitching the tent and arranging the camp, Telefont and Alexai, the two remaining Tongousians, sat down to a gallon kettle of hot tea, and did not leave it until they had emptied it of the last drop. They then cooked a four-quart pailful of boiled fish and soup, the contents of which they also devoured. By this time Zakhar, the other Tongouse, came up, cold and hungry. The same pail was then cooked *twice full* of boiled beef, which the three emptied both times, even cracking the bones for the marrow. Then, after rinsing the pail, they cooked it full of krupa, a kind of mash, which they ate as soon as it was prepared. After all this, either their appetites were not fully appeased, or else they feared to

break off too abruptly, for they commenced eating dried ukale, even devouring the fish-skins, which they first broiled in the flames of the fire. All this occurred in our presence. The last thing I heard after retiring was the cracking of beef-bones for the marrow." The same writer adds: "The improvidence of these natives is as astonishing as their ravenousness. They will consume nearly a week's provisions in one night, and go hungry the remaining six days!"

We now come to the link between civilized Siberians of Russian extraction, and the aborigines; viz. the Bouriates, who number some 270,000, and are the most populous tribe in Eastern Siberia.

The Bouriates originally came from the region north of the Trans-Baikal region, known as Trans-Baikalia, on the eastern shores of Lake Baikal. They are now, however, to be found in almost any part of Siberia on the great post road from Irkoutsk to Tomsk. Though as wild and uncouth as the Yakoutes a hundred years ago, the Bouriat is now Russianized. A number have renounced the Chaman for the Christian religion,

but the majority adhere to the Buddhist faith. This does not, however, prevent them from performing the duties of yemstchik, post-house clerk, policeman, and other Government officials, so efficiently that they are preferred by some, in these menial capacities, to the European Russian. There are, of course, various degrees of civilization in this race, ranging from those living in their own primitive tents to the Government tchinovnik, with a luxurious dwelling in one of the principal streets of Tomsk or Irkoutsk. I met at Kiakhta, in 1887, a young Bouriate lady who had been educated in Paris. She had the queer physiognomy peculiar to her race—the flat nose, high cheek-bones, thick lips, and narrow twinkling eyes—but was dressed in the latest European fashion, and sat down to the piano and gave us Mendelssohn's "Lieder" and one of Liszt's "Rhapsodies" with an execution and feeling that I have seldom heard surpassed by an amateur.*

The Bouriate language, which has a nasal

* See "Pekin to Calais."

twang very unmusical to a European ear, is a kind of patois composed of Mongol and Chinese, in which (like the Yakoute) a few Turkish words occasionally crop up. Many of the richer Bouriates own large herds of cattle and sheep; in fact, the latter animal forms their staple food. Brick tea is also consumed in large quantities, mixed with mutton fat and flavoured with salt. I once drank this decoction in a Mongol yourt in the Gobi Desert, and did not get the taste out of my mouth for days.

The peninsula of Kamchatka, the home of the Kamchatdales and Kuriles, is about eight hundred miles long by one hundred and thirty miles wide, and is situated in the Sea of Okhotzk, opposite the port or fishing village of that name in Siberia. Okhotzk may literally be called the end of the world. Not a tree or blade of grass is visible within miles of the wretched native huts and two or three wooden official houses that constitute the colony. Summer here consists of three months of damp, chilly weather, followed by nine months of cold as raw as it is intense.

The sun is seldom, if ever, seen. Fish, and nothing but fish, constitutes the diet of the three or four hundred inhabitants. They certainly have a large and varied choice, for no less than fourteen varieties of salmon are found here. From total absence of fresh vegetables, however, scurvy rages in winter.

Kamchatka may be reached by sea from Okhotzk in summer; but the route generally taken is by land, round the coast to Petropavlosk,* the chief town of the peninsula, on the North Pacific, a distance of over 2500 miles, which is mostly accomplished by means of dogs and reindeer. The population of the peninsula is roughly estimated at five thousand, about five hundred of whom live at the capital. The aboriginal tribes are rarely met with in or near Petropavlosk, where society consists chiefly of Government officers and Cossacks, stationed here to preserve order among these remote subjects

* Petropavlosk is said to possess the finest harbour in the world. The allied French and English fleets were repulsed here by the Russians during the Crimean War.

of the Czar, who, however, give them little or no trouble.

The aboriginal inhabitants are divided into two distinct races—the Koriaks in the north, and Kamchatdales in the south. The latter are the most civilized and hospitable, probably on account of their more frequent intercourse with Europeans. They are of a light copper colour, with narrow black eyes, thick lips, flat noses, and long streaming hair, which they plaster over with seal oil, blubber, and other fishy abominations.

A Kamchatdale may be smelt yards off, their bodies exuding a strong odour of fish, on which they subsist, eaten raw. Unlike the fierce and savage Koriak, the Kamchatdale is always glad to welcome or help a stranger. Up till some years ago many of the Kamchatdales were Chamans, but that religion has died out a good deal since the advent of the Russians. The Kamchatdales have, curiously enough, a practice identical with one amongst the Dyaks of Borneo: that of kindling a light by rapidly turning the end of a dry stick in a hole in a plank of wood,

and using a piece of withered grass for fuel. They are also, like the Dyaks, capital dancers and mimics, imitating in their dances the movements of animals and birds with surprising grace and accuracy.

Although there is but little difference in language, the Koriaks are the very opposite of their friendly neighbours, and are said to be the most treacherous and degraded race in Siberia. Many are without a fixed abode; but the stationary ones are much finer in physique, though less wild, than their wandering brothers. The latter gain their living by hunting and herds of reindeer, the former by fishing. The tents of the nomad Koriaks are of reindeer skin, and much smaller than the permanent wooden huts of their stationary countrymen; but in neither can a European remain more than a few moments, the smoke and stench being intolerable to any but a Koriak's eyes and stomach. Drunkenness among the Koriaks is rarer than among the Kamchatdales, for the good reason that the former cannot get drink.

A mushroom or fungus, however, found in the north-east portion of their territory, makes an admirable substitute. It is, perhaps, happily rare, a mouthful of it producing helpless intoxication for three or four days.

Next to the Samoyedes, the Koriak women are perhaps the most to be pitied of any Siberian tribe. Extremely jealous, the husbands frequently slay their wives on mere suspicion of infidelity. No woman is permitted to beautify herself, or even wash, for fear of attracting the notice of other men. To make assurance doubly sure, these skin-clad Othellos sometimes compel their wretched wives to cover their entire bodies with a thick coating of rancid oil, which effectually keeps even the most amorous lover at a safe distance.

There is plenty of wild-fowl in Kamchatka, and the country abounds with geese, duck, and snipe at certain seasons of the year. It is probably the only country in the world where the real wild dog is found. These live on the mountains, are of a buff or grey colour, the size

of a huge mastiff, and so fierce that the natives are sometimes killed when attempting to catch them for sleighing purposes. They are fed (in their civilized state) on fish, and, the rivers of Kamchatka teeming with salmon, have no difficulty in procuring a meal whenever they want it—merely walking into a stream and seizing their prey with their teeth.

We came across but few Ostiaks during our journey down the Obi river, most of them having already struck their birch-bark dwellings and migrated north to their winter quarters and reindeer. Two or three times, however, between Sourgout and Tomsk, we came upon an Ostiak encampment, with its three or four grimy triangular tents, savage dogs, and fleet of canoes. In some cases the Ostiak dwellings consist of birch-bark huts, built on poles eight to ten feet high. It is curious to note that this style of architecture prevails among the Borneo Dyaks, but not with the same object, the latter being thus guarded against the attack of enemies, the Ostiaks against inundation.

The latter, who inhabit the vast tract of country lying between the Obi and the shores of the Frozen Ocean, number about fifteen thousand. They are a good-tempered, hospitable people, fond of trade, but averse to anything like hard work. In appearance they are miserable creatures with yellowish complexions, flat faces, and coarse dark hair. They subsist, like the Yakoutes, entirely on what they kill—fish in summer, in winter game. Like the Yakoutes also, scurvy and a still more loathsome disease, introduced by Russian traders, is slowly but surely stamping them out. The costume of the tribe is a picturesque one, and consists of reindeer skin, trimmed with bright red or blue cloth and coloured beads, some of the richer ones being hung round with small silver coins, Russian twenty-kopek pieces, etc.

The Ostiaks are good hunters, and especially skilful in the use of the bow. In shooting squirrels, for instance, they use a blunt arrow, and are careful to hit the animal only on the head, so as not to injure the fur. In summer

when, between June and August, night is unknown in these regions, their chief occupation is fishing, the produce of their nets being salted and sent on to Tobolsk for export to European Russia. They have a clever method of capturing that delicate and expensive fish, the sturgeon. During the winter months these fish lie in the beds of rivers in clusters for the sake of warmth. The Ostiak cuts a hole in the ice and sets his rod, but this would be useless unless the sturgeon can be induced to leave their shelter. To effect this, the fisherman fashions some balls of clay, which he makes red hot in the fire. These are then thrown into the stream through a hole in the ice below his bait. The heat communicated to the water by the fire-balls arouses the sturgeon. Rising to the ice, they swim slowly up stream (their invariable course) and presently arrive before the bait.

I visited an Ostiak settlement the evening of the day we left Sourgout. The *Kosagofski* was to remain here a couple of hours to take in wood, which gave me time to walk the half-mile or so

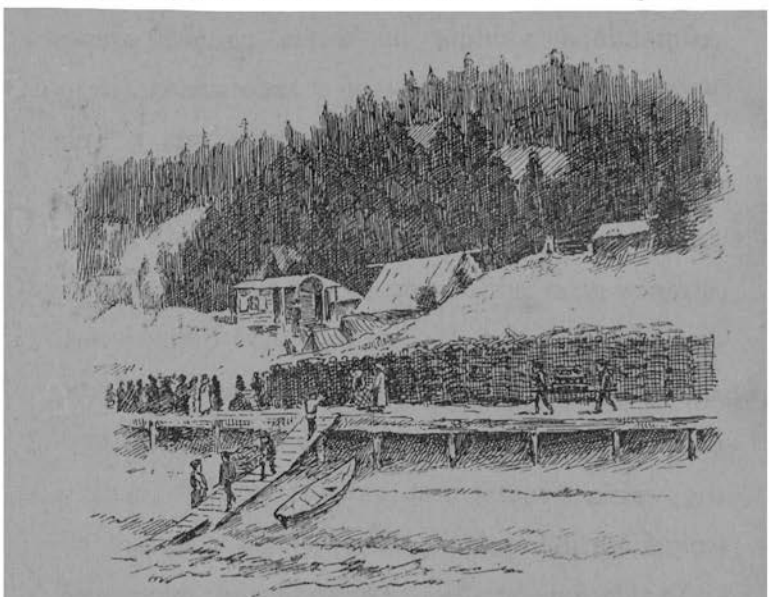
that separated the encampment from the steamer. It was a weird scene. The rain had ceased. Here and there patches of clear starlit sky were visible, while a dense white mist hung motionless over forest and river. A thin column of grey smoke, rising from among the trees, guided me to the spot where, in a clearing, stood three tents, and crouched round a camp fire twenty or thirty grey, silent forms. Long before I was perceived, a couple of huge dogs had leapt from the group and dashed towards me, but at a word from one of the men, they slunk back, growling. It is never safe to approach these encampments alone. I did so on one occasion and had cause to repent it, being attacked by half a dozen savage brutes, who would have made short work of me, had not an old woman emerged from a tent and beaten them off. The Ostiak dog is a sharp-looking, sagacious creature, of a black-and-white colour. They are, by nature, the cleanest that exist, going daily of their own accord and bathing throughout the summer months. In winter they cleanse themselves by rolling in snow.

I had intended entering one of the tents, but the stench drove me back. The smell of the Ostiak, peculiar to himself, is so sickening and overpowering that it beggars description. Russians ascribe it to their invincible repugnance to salt. None will touch the latter, although it has several times, and at a great expense, been distributed amongst them by the Government, and this is probably the cause of the majority of the loathsome diseases from which they suffer. Some of the men were pleasant looking, and the women would have been almost pretty, had they possessed any teeth, which, after the age of fourteen or fifteen, usually loosen and drop out from the same cause.

Such is a brief sketch of the aborigines of Asiatic Russia. The reader should, however, not forget that the latter country is now almost as much the "land of the stranger" as Australia. It is, therefore, more than probable that, less than a century hence, the "survival of the fittest" will be exemplified by the total disappearance (with the exception of the Russianized Bouriate)

of the indigenous races of Siberia from the face of the globe.

The Obi river scenery cannot be called picturesque, and the monotonous life on board the *Kosagofski* became somewhat depressing after



A WOOD STATION, OBI RIVER.

leaving Sourgout. There is probably no river in the world with so many tributaries as the Obi, the basin of which contains more than a million and a quarter of square miles, an area nearly two thousand miles long, and twelve

hundred miles broad at the widest part. No less than seventy smaller streams join this river during its long winding course from the borders of China to the French Ocean. It is, therefore, not surprising that, in parts, this stupendous volume of water should present more of the appearance of a succession of huge lakes than a river—lakes teeming, as a rule, with fish and wild fowl, while inland, bear, wolf, and smaller ground game abound. It seems strange that no adventurous English sportsman has as yet explored these regions, where, during the summer months, camping out would be perfectly feasible, the expense almost *nil*, and the virgin ground not a three weeks' journey from Charing Cross.

Navigation on the Obi ends the middle of October. By the end of that month the river is generally covered with ice three to five feet thick. Frozen rivers in Russia are in England generally depicted with a smooth, unbroken surface, suggestive of skates and sleighs. This is far from being the case, especially on the Obi, where the im-

petuous torrent often throws up hillocks and miniature cliffs twenty to thirty feet high. Sparkling under a blue sky and brilliant sunshine, this boundless field of ice forms a *coup-d'œil* as striking as it is beautiful; but on dull days (which are happily rare) a Siberian river in mid-winter is the picture of darkness and desolation.

Two mysterious individuals joined us at Sourgout—an elderly man and woman. The former, who spoke French fluently, told me that he had been in Siberia for nearly ten years, having in the first instance been banished to Tobolsk for twelve months for a political offence. At the expiration of his sentence, however, Mr. Z——, who was a photographer, resolved to remain and try his fortune in a new country. Success attended his efforts, for he now owned a fine house in Tomsk and a substantial income, the more appreciated that Z—— had come to Siberia a penniless adventurer.

Madame Z——, who had accompanied her husband, was a vulgar, red-faced creature, of balloon-like proportions, a true *Siberienne*, who

spoke patois Russian and devoured nuts all day. The latter, by the way, is a recognized custom throughout Siberia. Every one on board, from the captain downwards, was provided with a supply of cobnuts. The floor and seats of the saloon were gradually strewn inch deep with the shells, while an incessant cracking went on throughout the day and greater part of the night. The pistol-shot-like sound became at last intensely irritating, so much so that, finally, in sheer desperation, I purchased a pound or so at one of the stations and joined in. The nuts (of the *Pinus cembro*, or Siberian cedar) are flavourless, insipid things. When these are unobtainable, the Siberians chew a kind of gum, with a strong taste of turpentine, which exudes from the same tree. European Russians call this pastime *conversation Sibérienne;* hardly a compliment to the mental capacity of their Asiatic countrymen.

One moonlight night, the photographer and I were smoking on deck. We were alone, for it was past eleven o'clock. Madame L—— had retired; the other passengers were below, eating,

sleeping, or engrossed in the more congenial occupations of nut-cracking and Vint.* Suddenly the mention of my name by my companion made me start; for it was unknown to others on board, even to Madame L——. "I have heard of you, Mr. de Windt," he began, "from a mutual friend. You were at Listvenitz, on Lake Baikal, in 1887. Do you recollect on that occasion coming across a photograph of Vera Figner?"

I remembered the circumstance perfectly. The photograph of the girl in question, a noted Nihilist, was shown me by the brother-in-law, a Pole, who was banished to Siberia for life.† Having served his time in the mines of Karâ, he had partially regained his liberty, and taken up his residence for good (under police surveillance) at Listvenitz. The man was a polite, pleasant-mannered fellow, and seemed to take a pride in relating his history, which, if true, was a remarkable one. His career commenced in 1867, when, for a trifling political offence, he was sent to Vologda, in European Russia, for three

* Russian whist. † See "From Pekin to Calais."

months. From here he managed to escape to Odessa, and thence to New York. In 1870 he left America to take a prominent part in the Paris Commune, and again managed to escape when the Imperial troops entered Paris—luckily for himself, for if caught he would assuredly have been shot. After residing for some months in Switzerland, he was sent by the secret society to which he belonged on a mission to St. Petersburg. This time, however, luck forsook him, and he was arrested, tried, and exiled for life. He was a mean, insignificant-looking little fellow, but with a sharp, clever face, and the eyes of a hawk. I shall never forget the expression he put into his parting words when, one sunny afternoon, I left him standing by the waters of the blue, unfathomable "Sea of Siberia," but a two days' march from China. "Good-bye, but I don't despair of seeing you again. I hope to do some work yet!" A wish I could not conscientiously reciprocate.

What surprised me most about this man was his intimate knowledge of London, although,

according to his own showing, he had never been there. "Don't you believe a word of it," said Z——, when I mentioned the circumstance. "London and Geneva are the head-quarters of Nihilism—especially the former. Our Listvenitz friend is, or was, a member of the same society as myself, which has two branches in London, one near King's Cross, the other at a French hotel in Greek Street, Soho.* It is extremely unlikely that a man of his active temperament should never have been sent to England on business. Pray do not imagine that I hold the same views as I did," said Z——, earnestly. "I gave up all that kind of thing ten years ago. It does not pay," he added, "in Russia, which is, after all, as free as any other country if you don't meddle with politics."

"Vera Figner was never sent to Siberia," continued Z——, in answer to my question, "but imprisoned in the fortress of Schlüsselburg on Lake Ladoga. She was only twenty-one when

* This house still exists. I suppress the address for obvious reasons.

arrested, and belonged to several revolutionary societies, where, being a pretty, clever girl, she soon gained great influence among the Socialist party. But she lacked courage, and was more fitted for a drawing-room than a dynamite



VERA FIGNER.

conspiracy. Married at the age of eighteen, she left her husband about a year before the assassination at Odessa, in 1882, of General Strelmkoff, the crime for which she was sentenced, first to death, and then to imprisonment for life. Degayeff, the Nihilist, first imbued Vera with

Socialistic ideas; but it was solely for the cause that she left her husband. Not a word was ever breathed against her virtue, even by her bitterest enemies. You may have heard her brother at the Opera in St. Petersburg. He is a celebrated tenor in Russia. Vera is supposed to be dead, but no one knows for certain. News travels slowly from Schlüsselburg, and is not always to be relied upon."

"But how did you know my name?" I ask, after a pause.

"I saw you in '87 when you passed through Irkoutsk."

Z—— is silent for a few moments. The time and place are favourable for confidences. Nothing human is visible, but the silhouette of the steersman standing darkly out against the starlit sky; not a sound to be heard but clank of engines and quick patter of paddle-wheels as we swing along past the low shadowy banks, shrouded in haze. For a true sense of loneliness and depression commend me to a Siberian river at night-time. Although hard to realize, at times,

on board the brightly lit steamer, it was none the less true that, if put ashore alone midway between the stations, one would in ten minutes have been as hopelessly lost as in the great Sahara Desert itself.

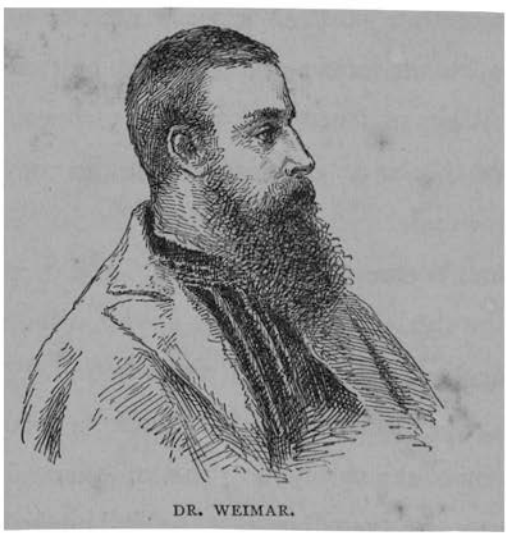
Z—— is inclined to be communicative. Lighting a fresh cigarette, he resumes:

"The majority of these revolutionaries are mere boys and girls, who, if they escape death or life-long banishment, live to see the error of their ways, and become good citizens. Men of Weimar's stamp are, perhaps, luckily rare in the Nihilist ranks."

"And who was Weimar?"

"A doctor by profession, who, although then a comparatively young man, was appointed manager of the Czarina's field hospital during the Russo-Turkish war. At the close of the campaign Weimar returned to Russia, and was invested with the order of Saint Anne, and a cross for bravery on the battlefield. Being possessed of private means, he then took up a practice in one of the finest houses in the Nevski Prospect, where,

being a personal friend of the Empress (then Crown Princess Dagmar) and well known in court circles, he rapidly became one of the first physicians in St. Petersburgh. But, like many other very clever men, Weimar was a restless, visionary creature. The acquisition of wealth afforded



DR. WEIMAR.

him no pleasure, his profession ceased to interest him, till finally he must needs dabble in politics. One fine morning he was arrested, and an inquiry brought to light his unmistakable connection with a serious conspiracy to overthrow the Government. The ingratitude thus shown towards the

imperial family, from whom he had received nothing but kindness and assistance, only aggravated Weimar's offence, and he was sentenced to deportation for life in Siberia. Thus, within two short years of his triumphant return from Plevna, where he had rendered such splendid service, to St. Petersburg, where he was socially as well as professionally welcomed by the highest in the land, Weimar (then barely thirty years of age) was on his way to the gold mines of Karâ, a political exile.

"But Weimar had a friend—and a powerful one—in the Crown Princess, who, although the evidence against him was overwhelming, steadily refused to believe in his guilt. Upon the accession to the throne, in 1881, of Alexander III., the Empress despatched a special messenger to the mines with the offer of a free pardon, on condition that Weimar signed an agreement never again to act against the Government. But the ungracious reply to this last and touching proof of friendship was to the effect that the exile could give no assurance till he had seen for himself how

Russia was governed by her new Czar! The man's conduct savoured of madness throughout," concluded Z——. "He died at Karâ in 1885, relentless to the last."

"Did Weimar actually work in the mines?" I ask, as we presently grope our way below through the darkness.

"For a few months. He was then released and allowed to live under police surveillance, like other political exiles. But I suppose you are aware that there is no such thing as 'working in the mines' at Karâ. All the gold mining is done above ground."

I was already aware of this fact, which may, however, be new to some of my readers, especially if, like myself, they have perused a work entitled "The Russians of To-day."* This book was published in 1878, and contains much entertaining, if not very instructive matter, dealing with Siberia. The author, however, had never visited the country in question. Anent the mines he writes:—

* "The Russians of To-day," by the author of "The Member for Paris." London: Smith, Elder, 1878.

"The miners are supposed to be the worst offenders, and their punishment is tantamount to death by slow torture; for it is certain to kill them in ten years and ruin their health long before that time. If the convict have money or influential friends he had better use the time between his sentence and transportation in buying a warrant which consigns him to the lighter kinds of labour above ground, otherwise he will inevitably be *sent under earth, and never again see the sky, until* he is hauled up to die in an infirmary."

A terrible picture indeed! It seems a pity, however, that the writer should not have confined himself to fiction pure and simple while he was about it. His assertion that "Siberia is a territory covering about *six* times the area of England and Scotland" somewhat damages his reputation as an authority on Asiatic Russia. As Dr. Lansdell remarks, "Had he written *sixty* times he would have been not far from the mark!"

But even the foregoing graphic, if somewhat incorrect, account pales before one that appeared

in an American newspaper a few months since, wherein the writer gravely assured his reader that "thousands of innocent men and women were slowly rotting below ground in Siberia, their flesh and bones eaten away by the poisonous exhalations of the dark, deadly *quicksilver mines*" ! Let us hope that the writer has never visited Siberia; that he is, to use an Americanism, an unconscious "untruther," for there is not a quicksilver mine in the country!

I slept long and soundly till awakened by Z——, who was leaving us at Narym, which we were now nearing. The weather had changed. A cold boisterous wind had lashed the yellow river into a fair semblance of a heavy sea, so much so that dead-lights were shipped below and dressing operations had to be performed by candle-light. The *Kosagofski* was pitching and rolling heavily, and taking in seas over the bows, as I discussed my morning tchi, with a sense of cold and discomfort engendered by an icy draught, guttering tallow dip, and the confused sounds of creaking timbers, banging doors, and squalling children

that, when battened down on board ship, betoken dirty weather.

Grasping the brass handrail, I ascend, not without difficulty, to the saloon. Here it is, at any rate, daylight, but what an atmosphere! At least a dozen cigarettes are in full blast, and the fumes of cognac and vodka are enough to knock you down. Every window is tightly closed. At one of the tables the ex-Mayor of Tomsk is placidly discussing his breakfast, sublimely indifferent to the fact that just in front of him a woman and child are groaning in all the agonies of sea-sickness. The millionaire family has succumbed to the same complaint, and lies sprawling in every direction in ungraceful, not to say, indelicate attitudes. What is it like outside? Above, a leaden washy sky flecked with white mare's-tails flying before the gale; ashore, some stunted willows and a few clumps of withered grass drooping with the rain, some low slimy mud-banks dislodged, here and there, by the swollen, turbid river, now the colour of *café au lait;* far ahead, a brown blur occasionally visible through driving sleet—Narym. The

coup d'œil is scarcely inspiriting, especially when seen under present circumstances, through a dirty, fly-blown window!

Two hours at Narym, a dreary-looking place of two thousand inhabitants, gave me time for another visit to the barge. I again walked (this time accompanied only by a sentry) through the kameras and infirmary. The atmosphere of the former was somewhat closer to-day, all the prisoners being confined below on account of the weather, and the ports and gangways closed. But there was no offensive smell, save that of "papirossi," which till we appeared both men and women had been smoking. The infirmary contained three fresh cases—two of diarrhœa, and one of inflammation of the eyes. The sick child and its mother were gone. I inquired, and was told the little girl had been discharged cured. The sentry smiled at my incredulity when I insisted on being taken to the women's kamera and shown the blue-eyed baby, who was playing with her doll and looked chubby and well. I gave the mother a couple of

rouble * notes, which, as I left the barge, I saw exchanged for fresh milk, kalatchi, and jam, under the personal supervision of the little ex-patient. The jam looked so good that I bought some for Madame L——, who pronounced it delicious. Siberian housewives are famed for their preserves. They have ample materials, for the country possesses no less than twenty different kinds of berries, of which the Brousniki, a kind of bilberry, has the most agreeable and delicate flavour. This fruit is also largely used as a febrifuge.

Changes of weather are sudden in these latitudes. By three o'clock the same afternoon the wind has dropped as if by magic, and the deck passengers crawl out like flies, to bask on deck in the brilliant sunshine. A motley crowd these: mostly moujiks in sheep-skins, astrachan bonnets, and high boots of thick white felt picked out with black stitching; the women shapeless

* The word "rouble" is derived from the Russian word "roupit," to cut. It is so called because up to four hundred years ago the Russians used bar silver as currency.

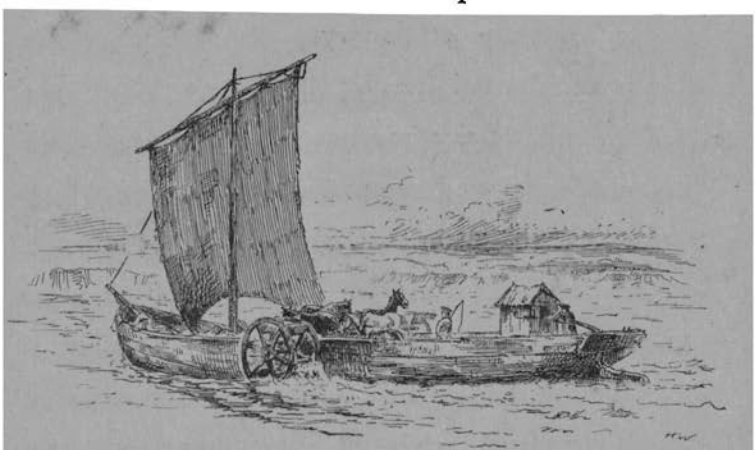
bundles of elk and bear skin, topped by a gaudy cotton handkerchief. Two or three dwarfish Ostiaks, a mass of rags, fur, and filth, hold aloof, as if conscious of their unsavoury presence and the odour they disseminate of un-



A JEW FROM BOKHARA.

cleanliness, fish, and wood-smoke. A Jew from Bokhara, in long black gaberdine, with greasy beard and corkscrew ringlets, drives a roaring trade in shoddy cloth and cheap cutlery; while a Tartar from Kazan, solitary and friendless,

gazes moodily at the scene. The latter appears daily, at sunset, on the upper deck, spreads a strip of carpet, and goes through his devotions amongst the first-class passengers, the lower deck being too crowded. It is gratifying to note on these occasions that as much respect and forbear-



PADDLE-BOAT WORKED BY HORSE-POWER, OBI RIVER.

ance are shown the Mahometan as though he were a member of the orthodox Church.

We pass to-day one of the queerest craft it has ever been my lot to look upon—a clumsily built boat, about forty feet long, decked over, with one sail. Amidships is a crank worked by three horses pacing slowly round in a circle,

and turning a pair of paddle-wheels, of such tiny dimensions that their blades scarcely dip a couple of inches below the surface of the water. A boy, armed with a huge whip, urges on the team, but his efforts are apparently unavailing. The vessel, which is supposed to be going up stream, remains stationary. One sees strange things in Siberia!

The end of my journey draws near. Two days more and we have passed Kolpatchef, a long straggling village on the right bank. At midday, on the 30th of August, we leave the Obi to enter its tributary the Tom, a river, though smaller, of considerable size. The banks are well wooded and picturesque, while, at short intervals, small villages, strips of pasture, and cultivated land show that we are rapidly approaching the capital of Western Siberia.

Great are the preparations for landing. The decks are almost impassable owing to the millionaire lady's luggage; enormous basket trunks, crammed with the latest Paris fashions, destined to dazzle and excite the mad jealousy of the

ladies of Irkoutsk—that is, if they ever get there, which, being acquainted with the so-called road, I greatly doubt. It is a glorious day. Every one is laughing, drinking healths, and congratulating themselves that the voyage is practically over, that our destination will be reached to-night. Even the hungry French governess is in the wildest spirits, somewhat rudely checked when the tutor, who has been imbibing not wisely but too well, attempts to embrace her in the companion. There is but one heavy heart, one sad face on board. The manner and laugh are forced, the big blue eyes dim; for Madame L——,—poor little soul!—knows that, for her, Tomsk is but another stage on the road to exile.

We are destined not to arrive till late. Navigation is difficult, for the river is unusually low, and the grating sound of sand and gravel against the keel of the *Kosagofski* is constantly heard during the afternoon, as we forge slowly and cautiously ahead. I intend, be it day or night, to proceed to the Tomsk Forwarding Prison with

the gang we have brought—no matter the hour—to witness the reception of a convict party in this, one of the largest prisons of Siberia.

"The prisoners are never landed after dark," says the captain. "To-morrow morning, at daybreak, they will be marched to the Peresilni, for we cannot possibly reach Tomsk till nine at the latest."



SUNSET ON THE OBI.

We are still twenty miles off at sunset, a truly Siberian sunset; when dusk creeps almost imperceptibly over the earth, ere night envelops the dense forest and wild steppes of this strange lone land. The air is fresh and delicious, sweet with the scent of pines, newly turned earth, and dewy grass. Behind us a dark belt of fir trees

forms a barrier between earth and sky, dividing gold, rose, and turquoise from the placid silvery river. Every twig and branch stands out sharp and clear-cut against the glorious sunset. Before us the moon, like a huge ball of fire, rises lazily above the woolly grey mist hanging motionless over hill and valley, and the evening star glimmers faintly on the western horizon. A few minutes more and the darkened sky is powdered with a myriad glittering worlds, confused and indistinct, save where the unwavering lights of the North Star, Great Bear, and Orion shine calm and clear; while, far away, the little Pleiades, like a spray of diamonds, glint and glisten in their setting of soft deep blue.

It is past eleven, but the great black hulk astern is glittering with lights, and figures are moving hurriedly about the cage and upper deck. I can just make out Galtine's figure as he paces up and down outside his cabin in the moonlight, probably rejoicing, like myself, that the voyage is nearly over. But an uncomfortable doubt suddenly crosses my mind. Why this unusual

activity on the barge, if its inmates are not to be removed till to-morrow? Can the captain have intentionally deceived me? I have two hours before me, anyhow; and two hours of sleep will amply suffice me in case of a night landing. The prisoners are evidently not at rest, for, as I leave the deck, I hear them singing, in chorus, Volga boat-songs and lilting tuneful airs of the Don and Little Russia. Then there is a pause of a few moments, and presently the wailing "Miloserdnaya" bursts, with all its weird sweetness, upon the night.

"Help, O my brothers, help the 'unfortunates!' *
Lord God, look down on us; lighten the road,
The dark road of Siberia."

* * * * *

"Well, he shan't come to-morrow morning if I can help it, permit or no permit. The idea of coming bothering about at such a time, when things are all topsy-turvy. Why can't he wait till the next day, when they are comfortably

* Nestchastni, or "unfortunates," is the name given to all prisoners in Siberia.

housed? It is too ridiculous. In the first place, we did not expect the fellow for another month."

I am awakened by the speakers and the sound of clinking glass, and know, by the silence on board and quiet lapping of the stream against the side, that we have arrived. The little time-piece points to three o'clock, but the saloon is still a blaze of light. At a table, a bottle of champagne between them, sit Galtine and a stranger, a burly, black-bearded man in prison uniform of dark green and orange piping, whose remarks I have unintentionally overheard. Galtine, although evidently in the presence of a superior officer, has not yet discarded the tweed jacket and gold shoulder-straps.

I will no longer play the eavesdropper.

"Good evening, Galtine. At what time does your gang start for the prison in the morning?"

My question has the effect of arousing the fat stranger, who, puffing viciously at his "papiroska," blurts out rudely that to-morrow, at least, the doors of the Peresilni are closed to me.

Seeing that I am about to reply somewhat warmly, Galtine breaks hurriedly in:

"This, Mr. de Windt, is the governor of the Tomsk Peresilni."

I bow, and receive a curt nod in return. It is evidently time to produce the talisman, for, filling himself a bumper of champagne, my new acquaintance brusquely adds, with a hoarse laugh—

"You can make your mind easy and have your sleep out; I shall not allow you to enter my prison to-morrow."

"I am sorry to inform you that I intend to visit your prison on the arrival of Captain Galtine's gang to-morrow morning," I say, slowly and distinctly, unfolding the precious document. "You will see by this paper that there is nothing to prevent my doing so at once, if I choose."

Galtine has gradually become paler, continually interrupting me with whispers of: "No, no; wait till next day;" "You really must not talk like this;" "Tut, tut, tut; you will get into

trouble." But the governor's bark is worse than his bite. He is, as I afterwards discover, a good fellow in the main, and having read my authority, apologizes: "I did not know your permit was so complete, but, believe me, what I am doing is only for your convenience and comfort. To-morrow you will see us at our worst——"

"My very reasons for coming. Captain Galtine, will you kindly let me know when you are on the point of starting? Good night;" and I descend the stairway to the sleeping saloon, followed by a muttered torrent of invective from the governor, in which the words *Cochon d'anglais* are frequently and painfully distinguishable.

There is some excuse, after all, for his wrath. I doubt if even the governor of an English prison would care to have his establishment minutely inspected at so short a notice.

CHAPTER VIII.

SIBERIAN EXILE.

STRANGE as it may seem to the reader, the name of "Siberia" has a far more terrible significance in England than in Russia. The word is suggestive, to the majority of Englishmen, of mystery, cruelty, and death. It conjures up vague visions of dark dungeons and deadly mines; men dying under the knout; and the ravishing of young and innocent women by guards and prison officials. There seems also to be a rooted idea that "exile to Siberia" must necessarily mean banishment for ever. We, in England, are apt to overlook the fact that there are numberless grades of exile, ranging from life-long imprisonment at Kará or Nertchinsk to a couple of months (under police surveillance only)

in some town or village just over the Asiatic frontier. Thus, on my return to Europe, I met a medical student at Tiumen, who made a jest of being sent there from Moscow for six months, for, as he laughingly called it, "change of air!"

The sensational canards that appear from time to time in the English newspapers are, no doubt, answerable for much of the ignorance that exists in this country anent the Russian penal system. "Horrible Massacre of Prisoners in Siberia," "Another Slaughter of Exiles in Siberia," "More Siberian Atrocities"—such headings as these constantly meet the eye on flaming posters in the London streets. I have generally, however, found the thrilling stories they advertise dwindle down to vague, rambling statements, emanating as a rule from Vienna or Berlin—a tissue, as regards Siberia, of local and geographical errors. But the British public read, learn, and, unfortunately, inwardly digest this morbid trash. Talk to an English working-man of Siberia, and he will raise his eyes and thank God that he is not a subject of the Czar. Question a Russian in the

same station of life, and he will probably tell you that he is saving up money to go to this much-reviled country. It will scarcely be credited that, in Russia, petty crime is often committed for the mere sake of being sent, at Government expense, to the "Land of Gold," as it is called by the peasantry. Yet this is the case. But I do not intend to discuss this subject either for or against the Russian Government. I am unbiassed either way, and my object in visiting the prisons of Siberia was not to theorize, but to lay bare plain, unvarnished facts. I will, however, give the reader a brief sketch of the Siberian penal system (political and criminal) before asking him to accompany me to the now famous Forwarding Prison of Tomsk.

Banishment to Siberia dates from about the middle of the seventeenth century, when, during the reign of Alexis Michailovitch, father of Peter the Great, the first convoy of prisoners crossed the Ourals into Asia. For some years the number of exiles was insignificant. It was not till the abolition of the death penalty by the

Empress Elizabeth in 1753, that a marked increase was shown. No reliable statistics, however, exist as regards Siberia up to the year 1823, although prison reforms had been carried on for some time prior to that date in European Russia, mainly through the exertions of John Howard,* the English philanthropist, and Venning, the Quaker.

There are several places of banishment in Russia—Turkestan, the Caucasus, Archangel, etc.; but with these we have no concern. The number of exiles sent to Siberia for the last fifteen years averages about seventeen thousand per annum. Of these, political offenders form a very small percentage. The majority of the convicts are ordinary criminals, with at least thirty per cent. of vagabonds, exiled by order of the Mir, and to the latter institution is largely due the overcrowding that has existed up till lately in Siberian prisons and *étapes*. The Mir is a kind of village parliament, invested with the power, under certain conditions, of

* Howard died in Russia, in 1790, of gaol fever.

banishing from its district any pernicious or burdensome member of the community. Let a man desert his home and family, become idle and dissolute, or, as we say in England, "get thrown on the parish," forthwith the Mir meets in solemn conclave, and the culprit is despatched (at the expense of his village) to Moscow, *en route* to Siberia, not as prisoner, but colonist; for the Mir has only the power to exile, not to send into penal servitude; and the limit is a term of five years in Western (not Eastern) Siberia. The majority of these men are drunkards, and petty theft is their greatest crime. As, in most cases, they are accompanied by their wives and children, it may easily be imagined that the gaols and *étapes* were (till the powers of this rustic council were restricted) filled to overflowing. Official statistics show that between the years 1867 and 1876, 151,584 persons of all classes were exiled. Of these, 18,582 were condemned to hard labour, 28,382 to banishment with loss of civil rights, 2551 to simple domiciliary exile, and no less than 78,686 sent by order of the Mir!

Again, in 1883, of 15,000 exiles, 6000 were sent by the Mir. The latter were accompanied by their wives and families, numbering over 3000—nearly two-thirds of the convict population!

There are two kinds of criminal prisoners in Siberia, namely, those who have forfeited all civil rights, and those who, though undergoing long terms of penal servitude, have retained them. An exile of the first category is, from the date of his sentence, practically dead to the world. He can never hope to return to Europe, his property goes to his heirs, he loses everything he has, even to his wife and name; for the former is at liberty to re-marry, while the latter, as a legal signature, is worthless. This class is distinguished by the head being half-shaven. In some cases (as a punishment) the hideously grotesque appearance is increased by the beard and moustache being allowed to grow only on one side of the face. The women, although they suffer the same punishments and deprivations as the men, are not disfigured in any way. Free wives are allowed to accompany their husbands

into exile at the expense of the State, on condition that they live in the *étapes*, and submit to prison regulations; but husbands, under similar circumstances, must pay their own expenses. Although the former is common enough, the latter occurrence is rare.

The second-grade convicts lose no family or property rights, but are destined, their imprisonment over, for colonization. There is a wide distinction between the two, for of this class many eventually find their way back to European Russia, and the majority serve but a short term of penal servitude, though their sentence be a severe one. If well conducted, they are generally permitted to live outside the prison with their families, earning their own livelihood, but devoting a portion of their time to Government work. Many of the women become domestic servants. No. 2 class is entitled, on the road, to many privileges and allowances denied to No. 1, although the diet scale is practically the same while in prison.

Political exiles (of whatever denomination) are

as distinct from the criminal convict in Russia, as debtor from felon in England. Here the mode of transport varies according to the offence. A dangerous Nihilist is invariably sent to his destination in charge of two *gendarmes*, and travels, not with a gang, but alone. Less serious political offenders are sent with a convoy, but kept rigorously apart from the criminal convicts, and provided with telegas. They need not, therefore, walk a yard unless so minded; they wear their own clothes, and are lodged, on barge and in prison, in private cabins and cells. Save on the road, they need never see their less aristocratic companions, although we have been assured by an English author that "Nihilist conspirators, patriotic Poles, and young student girls are all mixed up and tramp together with criminals!" * Of another category is the political offender who is sent to reside at some Siberian town or village, under police surveillance, for any term varying from three months to two years. In this case the exile generally finds his way

* See "The Russians of To-day."

alone and in absolute liberty to his destination. He simply reports himself on arrival, and his "receipt" is telegraphed to the authorities at Moscow or St. Petersburg.

Female political prisoners are kept separate at night, but during the daytime are permitted to converse freely on the road, often sharing the same telega with the men. When crossing Siberia in 1887, I frequently met these parties, who, to judge from their demeanour, were anything but depressed at the prospects of exile. The men paid little regard to their personal appearance, and were usually dirty and unkempt; but the women were, as a rule, well and neatly dressed. Good looks, however, are rare amongst "political ladies." They are mostly of the "blue-stocking" type, short-haired, spectacled, and hard-featured, and would, I fear, if better known, lose much of the sympathy extended in England to the "young and beautiful exiles," of whom we hear so much. I don't think that, in all my experience, I have seen half a dozen that were not positively plain.

Of the life of political exiles at the mines I can say nothing, for, although permission was freely granted, I have not as yet had an opportunity of visiting either Karâ or Nertchinsk. I can safely say, however, that in prison and on the roads, I have invariably seen "politicals" treated with the greatest kindness, not to say respect, by the soldiers of the escort. I recollect on one occasion meeting an eastward-bound telega, between Krasnoyarsk and Tomsk, conveying a party of men and women in plain clothes. The men were smoking, the women singing, and, at our approach, stopped our yemstchik to inquire the time. Not a guard was to be seen for a few moments. I conversed in French with one of the ladies, over whose tweed dress a drab prison cloak, sewn with yellow cloth diamonds, was carelessly thrown. But for this she might have been an ordinary traveller. Presently two soldiers lounged up, and stood leaning on their rifles, while we handed a packet of cigarettes to the party, who had, they laughingly said, run out of papirossi. Then they bid us farewell, and moved on.

"Where are they going?" I inquired of the yemstchik who had spoken to the escort.

"To Karâ," was the answer. "They are Nihilists."

Let me add that this was in 1887, on my way to Russia from Pekin, when the authorities could scarcely have known that I was coming.

I have, on other occasions during the same journey, conversed with at least a score of "politicals" who had served their time at both the gold and silver mines, and they assured me that, in so far as treatment and physical comfort were concerned, they had little to complain of. "The description of our life at the mines given by your countryman Dr. Lansdell," said one, "is a very fair and unbiassed one." * I therefore reproduce it for the reader's benefit.

"On entering the second cell," writes the doctor, "occupied by a political prisoner just then at work in the mines, I had at last lighted upon the dwelling-place of one of a class about whom such harrowing stories have been told—a genuine

* See "Through Siberia."

political prisoner of high calibre, and a Jew to wit, undergoing the full sentence of punishment in the mines of Siberia.* This meant, in his case, that he had to labour in summer very much like a navvy, from six in the morning till seven in the evening, with certain hours for rest and meals; but in the winter he frequently had nothing to do. His wife was living near, and might see him twice a week. But his cell was that which struck me most. Compared to the criminal wards in the other prisons, this was a little parlour. It was clean, and in a manner garnished, . . . had certain articles of furniture and eating requisites, the placing and arrangement of which indicated familiarity with the habits of decent society, and showed the prisoner to be above the common herd. One of his books, I found, was a treatise on political economy, which may be noted in connection with the remark of Goryantchikoff in his 'Buried Alive,' who asserts that in his prison no book was allowed but the New Testament. The room

* This occurred at the gold mines at Karâ.

certainly was not large, but there was abundance of light, the outlook from the long window being, not on a prison wall surrounded by *chevaux-de-frise*, but commanding a view of the Karâ Valley, such as a Londoner might envy; whilst just outside was the public road, along which could be seen everything that passed. I speak only truth when I say that, if I had the misfortune to be condemned to prison for life, and had my choice between Millbank in London or this political cell at Karâ, I would certainly choose the latter."

I may as well here mention that all female prisoners (political and otherwise) at Karâ and Nertchinsk are employed in the prison kitchens, laundries, and hospitals, and, though occasionally put to agricultural labour, they are never made to work in the mines. Dr. Lansdell relates that, at the time of his visit, five out of every six of the women convicts at Karâ were murderesses, and had no connection whatever with political offences.

After the wild and exaggerated statements

that have been circulated of late throughout England, concerning the so-called inhuman treatment of political exiles in Siberia, I think it only fair to give another of Dr. Lansdell's experiences at the mines. The reader will note that, in this case, the prisoner had been convicted of participation in a plot against the life of the Czar—the gravest offence in the Russian law. The doctor writes—

"I met in Siberia one political prisoner whose case was more surprising, perhaps, than any I have mentioned. It was that of a man who had been concerned in one of the attempts upon the life of the late Emperor. He was sentenced to the mines, and no doubt popular imagination pictured him chained; whereas I found him confined indeed, but only to the neighbourhood, and dressed, if I remember rightly, in a tweed suit, looking highly presentable, and engaged in a way that I purposely avoid naming, but which did not necessitate the soiling of his fingers."

Again, writing of another prisoner, the same author says:

"The severest case of punishment of a political prisoner I met with was that of, I think, a Nihilist, at Karâ, who had daily to go to work in the gold mines; but, on returning, he had a room to himself, some of his own furniture, fittings, and books, one of which was on political economy. His wife lived in the neighbourhood, and could see him lawfully and bring him food at frequent intervals; and it was not difficult for her to see him unlawfully, for just in front of his window passed the public road, where she could stand and talk to him with ease."

I regret that I am unable to give any personal experiences as regards the mines of Eastern Siberia; but the above facts cannot fail to carry conviction to any one acquainted with Dr. Lansdell's plain, unexaggerated style of narrative. My knowledge of political exiles actually in prison is confined to those I saw at Moscow, Tomsk, and Tiumen; but I made the acquaintance of many more (both in 1887 and on the present occasion) living in comparative freedom at Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, and Irkoutsk, men and

women whose time at the Trans-Baikal penal establishments and mines had expired. From none of these, however, did I hear any complaints of overwork, much less of ill-treatment, during their imprisonment. The long, dark winter days, when outdoor work became impossible, were, they said, the worst punishment, though the prisons were well warmed and lit. Each exile had a separate cell, and books were provided. Once a month they were permitted to write to their friends, the letter being read and countersigned by the commandant. Permission was also given well-behaved prisoners, who could afford it, to purchase small luxuries from outside, in addition to the prison diet. Smoking was universal.

The majority of my political friends under *police surveillance at Tomsk* and Irkoutsk had aken up a trade or profession. Amongst them vere physicians, professors of music, languages, nd dancing, photographers, governesses, *modistes*, nd even innkeepers, who formed a small but elect society amongst themselves, from which chinovniks, or Government officials, were rigidly

excluded. Most of them appeared to be in easy circumstances, and were, they told me, little bothered by the authorities, so long as they registered their names, regularly, twice a week at the police office. To leave the town, even for a day, a permit was required; but this was seldom, if ever, refused.

Much has been written concerning the sorrows and sufferings of Polish exiles sent to Siberia after the insurrection by order of the Czar Nicholas. That prisoners at the mines were then severely, and occasionally cruelly, treated cannot unfortunately be denied. There was no properly organized exile system in those days; no Prisons Board at St. Petersburg to check, under humane and enlightened administration, the brutality of petty officials. There can be little doubt, however, that even then the dark side of things was greatly exaggerated. This theory is strengthened by the story of one Rufin Pietrowski,* a Pole, who in 1843 was banished *for*

* "My Escape from Siberia," by Rufin Pietrowski. Routledge. London, 1863.

life to Ekaterinski Zavod, near Tará, midway between Omsk and Tobolsk. Having accomplished his journey in a telega to the place of exile, Pietrowski writes that he was employed in a brandy distillery at a salary of ten, then twenty-five roubles a month. He was also permitted to reside with a fellow-political in a private dwelling, which he thus describes :

" Our cottage stood close . . . to the inspector's house and the distillery. It contained, firstly, a tiny entrance closed with double doors, admitting to our chief apartment, in which we cooked and ate, and two chambers besides. The kitchen stove which baked our bread also warmed one of the latter, used as our sleeping-room, and the other, which might be called our salon, was provided with a nice-looking Tartar ezulan, or round open fire-place, according to the local fashion. We had employed a Tartar to construct the house for us."

The writer then goes on to complain of the cold damp climate, but adds :

" These inconveniences affected us compara-

tively very little; we were quite consoled by feeling that the place, with all its shortcomings, was at least our own. . . . Our most serious difficulty was to secure a respectable housekeeper, one not too much given to brandy, and who would keep the house tolerably neat. . . . I avoided all intercourse with the Government officials as much as possible, although they sometimes expostulated with me for visiting them so seldom. . . . Receiving the salary I have already mentioned (twenty-five roubles a month), the inspector paid me besides five or ten roubles monthly from the money I had brought with me. We were thus able to live very comfortably, from the excessive cheapness of all the necessaries of life. Indeed, I never lived so well in France."

These extracts are taken at random from M. Pietrowski's own account of his life in exile. The author, a dangerous revolutionist, was condemned to banishment for life, with hard labour. The very words are significant to most English readers of chains, dungeons, and the knout; instead of which we find the convict

leading the life of an ordinary clerk, sitting in salons, and seriously concerned about the sobriety of his housekeeper. We may safely assume that M. Pietrowski has not brightened the picture, for, in other parts of the book, he loses no opportunity of vituperating the Imperial Government, describing, with some inconsistency, his abode of exile as "the place where, by an Emperor's will, I was to forego all the best privileges of humanity, and sink into the condition of the brutes, condemned as a convict to all the moral and physical sufferings inseparable from such a fate." And yet, a few pages further on, he assures us that "he never lived so well in France"!

But to return to the criminal class. Less than thirty years ago, hard-labour convicts were compelled to walk the whole distance from Moscow to their destination in Siberia—a journey, in some cases, of over two years. Railway and river transport have now shortened by nearly half the voyage to the most remote settlements, and the distance to Irkoutsk is now accomplished, under

favourable conditions, in about ten months. It is only at Tomsk that the actual march commences. As far as this, prisoners are conveyed entirely by steam. The great post road (the only one) leads thence, *viâ* Atchinsk, Krasnoyarsk, Kansk, and Nijni-Oudinsk, to Irkoutsk. Two days beyond the latter city lies Lake Baikal, across which prisoners are conveyed in large wooden hulks, towed, as on the Obi, by cargo steamers. The post road is then taken once more, and three or four weeks later, according to circumstances, the mines of Siberia (Karâ and Nertchinsk) are reached. The voyage from Moscow to the latter is usually made by ordinary travellers in a little under three months; but the time varies considerably with prison convoys, who may be detained by sickness, floods, impassable rivers, etc. Even under present circumstances it has been known to last two years. No travelling, however, is done in winter.

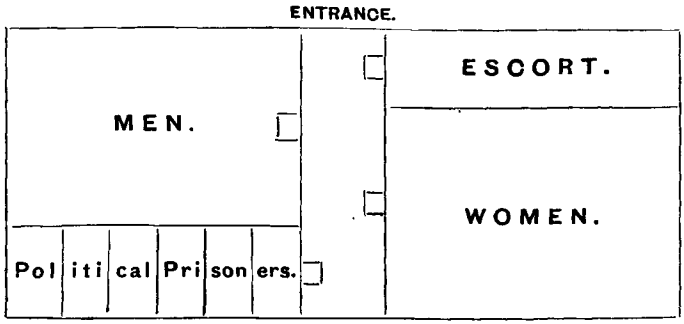
There are, roughly speaking, two hundred prisons of various sizes in Siberia. Of these more than two-thirds are *étapes*, or resting-

places for the night, which, with their bright yellow walls and red roofs, form a distinctive feature in nearly every Siberian village along the great post road. The latter, by the way, scarcely deserves the name. It is a mere track, cut by caravan traffic. A few days' rain converts it into an almost impassable morass, while in dry weather the grey, powdery dust is axle-deep. A triple telegraph wire runs the whole way to Vladivostok, the principal Russian naval station in Siberian waters. There is no wire direct to Pekin.*

From the Ourals to the Pacific, the village *étapes* are all built on the same model. They are oblong wooden buildings, three sides of which form quarters for the convicts and their guards. The remaining wing, detached from the main building, is used as a kitchen and wash-house, while the convoy commander's house stands by itself in a corner of the courtyard. Every *étape* contains four or more cells for political prisoners.

* A message may be sent from St. Petersburg to Vladivostok for fifteen kopeks, or about twopence-halfpenny a word.

The yard, used for exercise, is unpaved, and in wet weather often knee-deep in mud and slush. It is entered by a pair of high gates (the only entrance to the prison), the whole building being surrounded by a high palisade, at every corner of which is posted, night and day, a sentry with a loaded rifle. Both the kameras are provided with the sleeping platforms already described, while in some *étapes* (but not all) the "politicals" are supplied with bedsteads.



PLAN OF ÉTAPE MAIN BUILDING.

It will be seen by the accompanying sketch that in *étapes*, as in prisons, men are at night kept entirely apart from women. This rule is, however, relaxed in the daytime, when married men of good conduct are permitted to visit their

wives and families in the female kamera. Both the latter are washed down, carefully cleaned, and thoroughly ventilated, after the departure of each gang, by a man specially appointed for the purpose, who also attends to the lamps, heating apparatus, etc. The sanitary arrangements are never inside the main building. At night only, parashas * are placed in the corner of each kamera. In most cases, however, where the *étape* is surrounded by a palisade, the door of the men's ward is left open all night, giving free access to the yard.

A convoy or gang usually consists of four to five hundred men, women, and children, the military escort numbering about twenty-two to twenty-five, or at the rate of one guard to every twenty prisoners. It usually travels eighteen to twenty miles a day, marching two days and resting one. The hour of departure is usually 6 a.m.; of arrival, 7 p.m.; with a halt at midday for a meal and repose. Crossing Siberia in the summer of 1887, a day rarely passed that I did

* Night-vessels.

not meet one of these parties of grey-clad men and women, straggling along through the dust or mire with no attempt at order or regularity. Four or five soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets usually head the procession. Then, at a few yards' interval, come the hard-labour men deprived of all rights, some in chains and all half shaven. Following these are the ordinary convicts, men and women, in prison dress, marching in front of a string of telegas piled up with grey linen bags, the baggage of the convoy. Then come a number of empty vehicles. Surrounding the latter, some seated in the rough wooden carts, are the voluntary exiles, women and children, whose bright-coloured skirts and gaudy head-handkerchiefs give a touch of warmth and colour to the melancholy scene. After a long interval, say a mile or more, the "politicals" appear—two to four or five telegas containing men and women of every sort of description, from the red-shirted moujik to the gloved and daintily dressed dandy from Moscow or St. Petersburg; the low-born, slatternly woman

of the people to the *femme du monde* in neat tweed travelling gown and *gants de suède.* A bright blue or red cloth or woollen "Tam-o'-shanter" seemed to be *de rigueur* with the latter class, for I never saw them with any other kind of head-dress. Each political telega is accompanied by two Cossacks. Finally, a couple of hundred yards behind these, the commander of the escort brings up the rear of the procession, and, clad in dark-green uniform and white linen forage-cap, sits in solemn state in a tarantass, bumping and jolting along at the rate of three miles an hour, consuming the while innumerable papirossi to lighten the weary hours of the tedious, never-ending journey.

The number of telegas to each gang is limited, but, as a general rule, it is calculated at the rate of one telegà for two sick adults or six children This does not include the carts for the transport of prisoners' luggage. Each man and woman is allowed thirty pounds, but the rule is not strictly enforced, and many take more. There is a stringent order forbidding the transportation of

the sick or even the weak. Such as these are left at the large prisons, Tomsk, Krasnoyarsk, or Irkoutsk, until they are well enough to proceed on their journey.

In case of a sudden outbreak of infectious disease the commander of the gang is instructed to isolate the patient as much as possible, and to leave him at the first permanent prison hospital. The men, and especially the women, are medically inspected before starting from the Moscow Peresilni, and are not permitted to leave Europe unless *absolutely* free from disease of any kind whatsoever.

The summer costume of a Siberian (criminal) convict consists of a linen shirt and trousers, a long coat (reaching below the knee) of coarse camel's hair, and flat peakless cap of the same material. Yellow or black cloth diamonds sewn nto the back of the coat indicate, by their number, the length of the wearer's sentence. The female prisoners are also provided with grey coats of the same stuff and almost the same shape as that of the men. The following is a

list of the articles of clothing supplied by Government to each criminal exile on leaving Moscow :—

MEN.

Shirts	2
Drawers	2
Bandelettes * (flannel)	2
Bandelettes (linen)	2
Linen breeches	2
Linen tunics	2
Greatcoat of camel's hair	1
Sheepskin pelisse	1
Shoes (to last six weeks)	1
High boots (to last three months)	1
Summer cap (cloth)	1
Winter cap (fur)	1
Warm gloves	2
Leather belt	1
Bag for clothes	1

WOMEN.

Shirts	3
Drawers (in winter only)	2
Petticoats (flannel)	2
Petticoats (linen)	3
Bandelettes (linen)	4
Tunics	3
Greatcoat of camel's hair	1

* Long strips of flannel or linen wound round the legs and feet, and worn by the Russian peasantry in place of stockings.

Sheepskin pelisse	1
Head-handkerchiefs	6
Shoes (for six weeks)	1
High boots (for three months)	1
Warm gloves	2
Bag for clothes	1

There is no fixed diet scale while on the march through Siberia, and prisoners are permitted to purchase food at their own discretion, with the exception of alcohol. A daily ration allowance is made of fifteen kopeks for the privileged classes, which include the "politicals," and ten kopeks for the ordinary convicts. Although these sums may appear small, provisions—such as salt fish, eggs, black bread, etc.—are absurdly cheap in Western Siberia, and, in districts where they are dear, each man receives as much as thirty-five to forty kopeks per diem. Prisoners are also allowed to solicit alms in the villages, and receive money and food from charitable travellers, of whom in the summer season there is no lack. In Russia a deaf ear is seldom turned by prince or peasant to the prayer of the prisoner.

The appearance of convicts on the march is

the best guide as to whether they are supplied with sufficient food. There are, of course, weakly men and women in every grade of society, but most of the Siberian exiles that I have seen would compare very favourably with many of our English convicts, both in health and physique. The diet in the larger Siberian prisons (both permanent and forwarding) is even better than that of the Moscow Peresilni. At Tiumen, for instance, the daily rations are 2½ lbs. of rye bread, ½ lb. of meat on ordinary days, and ¾ lb. of meat on holidays, with salt, pepper, etc., and a daily allowance of kvas. At Karâ, where the men work in the mines, the allowance is even more liberal. Each receive daily 4 lbs. of bread, 1 lb. of meat, ¼ lb. of buckwheat, with tea, but no kvas. Dr. Lansdell has made an interesting calculation, comparing the respective diets of English and Russian prisoners. He has found that the English convict gets 10 lbs. of bread per week; the Russian, 25 lbs. The Englishman consumes 8 oz. of cooked meat and 7 quarts of soup; the Russian, 6 lbs. of meat. The Russian has

besides 1½ lb. of buckwheat and tea against the Englishman's 5 lbs. of potatoes, 1½ lb. of suet-pudding, and 14 pints of porridge and cocoa. Thus the English convict has, per week, 17½ lbs. of solid food, 14 pints of soup, and 14 pints of porridge and cocoa, while the Russian is allowed 33 lbs. of solid food and tea.

My experience of the interior of *étapes* is limited. By means of a silver key I visited one,* that of K——, between Irkoutsk and Tomsk, in 1887. In those days, however, the exile question interested me but little, and my inspection was consequently hurried and superficial. It took place in the early morning, just after the departure of a convoy, and the prison was empty. Preparations for the reception of the evening gang had not yet commenced, and the flooring of the kameras was, though sound and new, muddy, unclean, and strewn with scraps of paper, rags, and cigarette ends. The place was hot and stuffy, and smelt of humanity (I can use no other term), for over two hundred men had slept in the room.

* I do not give the name for obvious reasons.

There were no ventilating appliances, and the narrow windows had been tightly closed all night. To open or shut these is left to the discretion of the prisoners, who evidently, in this case, had a wholesome dread of cold, a bit of paper being stuffed into a broken pane to further exclude fresh air. Although in the month of August, the weather was damp and chilly, and a stove had been burning all night, which did not tend to improve the atmosphere. There was, however, no actually offensive smell, no mephitic odour, although the parasha had not been removed. I have passed the night in many a post-house in Siberia where the stench was infinitely worse than in this *étape* dormitory.

A double sleeping platform ran down the centre of the kamera, the walls of which were covered with inscriptions written on, or scratched into, the dirty whitewash. An order was issued some years ago for the careful erasure of these writings, which are usually in cipher, and used as a means of communication, but it was found almost impossible to carry it out. It would have meant a

daily and complete whitewashing of every *étape*, for it is not always easy, among two or three hundred men, to pick out the delinquent. The ingenuity displayed by prisoners in secret correspondence is remarkable. In certain places the very trees by the roadside are closely covered with mysterious devices, which all have a meaning known only to the writer and reader who follows him.

There were four political cells in the K—— *étape*—light, airy rooms, with large windows looking on to the road. The sole furniture consisted of a rough wooden bench (such as travellers sleep on in post-houses) and a small flap table fixed to the wall. I have already mentioned that "politicals" are provided with bedsteads on the road. My informant probably alluded to the bench I have just described, for the guardian at K—— told me that this model was in general use throughout the *étapes*. Two cells had been vacated the morning of my visit—one by a man, the other by a young woman. That of the latter was similar in every respect to that of the male

prisoner. No toilet articles are permitted, but the women invariably manage to smuggle in a bit of looking-glass, however small. "The ugliest are always the most particular," said my guide, with a grin.

The kitchen and cooking arrangements were clean, though primitive, but there was no washing accommodation whatsoever. Many of the *étapes*, however, are now provided with bath-houses. Cooking operations usually commence immediately on the arrival of a gang. The diet is not always the same, being left very much in the hands of the "starostas," or elders, whom I shall describe anon. I have once tasted the soup furnished by an *étape* kitchen. It was my first experience of prison fare, and is thus recorded in a former work on Siberia:* "We were regaled with a basin of broth at the village ostrog, or prison. I think that plate of soup did more towards dispelling any wild notions I may have had anent the ill treatment of Siberian exiles than pages of writing. Many a time, when

* See "Pekin to Calais."

delayed on the road, have I smelt the savoury fumes from the ostrog cook-house with envy, as I slunk back disgusted to my stale egg and black bread at the post-house."

Without, for a moment, inferring that all *étapes* on the great post road are as clean and well conducted as that just described, it is only fair to say that I heard of but one unfit for human habitation during my whole voyage across Siberia. This was at R——, between Nijni-Oudinsk and Kansk, where (according to the postmaster) the prison * was old and dilapidated and swarmed with rats and vermin. With this solitary exception, I have never come across a single *étape* that was not said to be clean and in good condition, or that did not appear to be in good repair and well looked after. *Étapes* are usually described in England as dreary-looking, tumble-down buildings. As a matter of fact, I have seldom seen neater buildings. But for bars and sentry-boxes, one would never take them for prisons at all, with

* This *étape* has been pulled down and entirely rebuilt.

their bright light-coloured walls, red roofs, and the neatly kept garden that, as a rule, surrounds three sides of the building.

Although prisoners on the road have little to complain of as regards food and lodging, there is one blemish in their arrangements which demands the special attention of the prison administration. A convict arrives at the *étape* tired out after a long march, and drenched with rain and perspiration. The Government provides him with a change of clothes, but no drying appliances. If the weather on the previous night has been wet, he must shiver in wet clothes the long night through. It is not unusual in Siberia to get six or seven days of rain without intermission. Most of us have experienced the misery and discomfort of a long cold drive in wet clothes after a day's shooting, even though there be a warm bath, cosy dressing-room, and good dinner at the end of it. Imagine the same sensation day after day, perhaps week after week, with nothing more cheering than prison fare to subsist on, and a plank bed to lie on at night. It is

bad enough for men; what must it be for women?

Yet the remedy is an easy one. The erection of wooden drying-sheds at every station on the great post road would be a trifling expense, for building materials are cheap, and the work could be carried out by the convicts themselves. Fuel costs next to nothing, while the saving in hospital expenses would probably be considerable. It may be that the Prisons Board at St. Petersburg have overlooked this minor, yet, at the same time, important defect. It is my duty, however, to expose the dark, as well as the bright, side of the exile system, and this is surely an evil that calls for immediate reform.*

After the morbid trash anent Siberian exile that has lately flooded the English newspapers and magazines (written, as a rule, by authors unacquainted even with European Russia), it is gratifying to read the following, by one evidently well acquainted with the working of the Russian penal system :—

"The criminal convicts are not, as a class, to be pitied. Relatively to the crimes committed the punishments are not severe, and in no other country in the world do the conditions of a released prisoner tend so usefully to his reform. The terms of imprisonment are seldom long. Even life sentences may be shortened by good conduct, and then, instead of the

Exile by sea to the island of Sakhalin, in the Sea of Okhotzk, has only existed of late years. It was established in 1869, after the cession of the country by Japan to Russia, in exchange for the Kurile Islands. The first batch of convicts was sent by land—a terrible voyage, for, after crossing Siberia, the exiles still had a river journey of two thousand miles down the Amour to Nicolaiefsk, whence they were shipped to their destination. This mode of transport, however, was soon abandoned, for the fatigue and privations attending this stupendous journey occasioned much sickness, and the convoy suffered severely from scurvy and other diseases. It was then decided to organize a naval prison service, to despatch convicts direct from Odessa *viâ* the

prisoner being cast adrift upon the world, to return probably to his degraded home and to renewed association with the scene and companions of his crime, he is given a piece of land and the money he has earned in prison. Other assistance, such as helping to build a house, is frequently given by the Government. Thus the prisoner becomes a colonist, free in most respects, save that he is unable to leave the country, and for some years remains to a certain extent under police surveillance" ("Scenes in Russia," by Andrée Hope, *Murray's Magazine*, November, 1891).

Suez Canal—a scheme which has been found entirely satisfactory. The prison ships are roomy and well founded. I visited one last year, the *Nijni-Novgorod*, a vessel of about three thousand tons, on board which every arrangement seems to have been made with regard to health and cleanliness, if not actual comfort. The wards are airy and well ventilated, the ports and gangways wide; while, in the tropics, bathing is permitted twice daily by means of the primitive but practical hose. The diet is practically the same as that of the Moscow Forwarding Prison, though fresh fish and rice may in some cases be substituted for meat and black bread. In port the convicts are permitted to purchase fruit and other luxuries; but, though it is tolerated elsewhere, smoking is here put down with a hand of iron. The women are lodged in the fore part of the *Nijni-Novgorod*, the men aft, and, as in Siberia, the sexes are rigorously separated at night. The voyage takes two months, but transportation by sea is only carried on during the cool season.

Sakhalin is a barren, desolate spot, separated from the mainland by the Gulf of Tartary, which at one place, the Nevski Straits, narrows to a width of six or seven miles across. Although nearly seven hundred miles long and one hundred and fifty miles broad, the island was practically unknown at the beginning of the century. Its native population consists of some five thousand Gilyaks, a wild but friendly tribe, who live by hunting and fishing. With the exception of a few Chinese settlers, employed in trade, the remainder of the inhabitants are Russian officials and convicts. The latter are mostly murderers and the most desperate criminals. No "politicals" are ever sent to Sakhalin.

Last year (1890), 1268 criminal exiles were landed on the island. Of these, 1050 men and 89 women were convicts under sentence. The remainder were voluntary exiles, consisting of 44 women, accompanied by 85 children. The principal hard-labour prisons are at Alexandrovsk * and Dui, while at Korsakof, at the

* This prison is built for eight hundred inmates.

southern extremity of the island, there is a military garrison of seven hundred men. The intention of the Government was to form an agricultural colony in Sakhalin, but the soil is so poor and climate so unfavourable, that, up till now, cultivation has proved a complete failure, and all supplies must be procured from the mainland. But the most sanguine could scarcely expect favourable results from a country shrouded, summer and winter, by dense fogs, where the sun is seldom seen, and where, even in the month of June, snow lies upon the hills, and the ground is frozen two feet deep. Notwithstanding these obstacles, most of the convicts are employed on the scanty patches of arable land that cover parts of the island, for there are no mines of any importance. Coal is worked near Dui, on the western coast, but it is poor stuff, and quite unsuitable for steam purposes. But Sakhalin could never, under the most favourable circumstances, become a place of commercial importance, for, in addition to all these drawbacks, it has not a single harbour worthy of the

name. As a safety-valve, however, for the over-crowded prisons and *étapes* of Siberia, it is an excellent institution.

Nearly half of the penal population on Sakhalin live in comparative freedom. Everything is done to encourage colonization, and a well-behaved prisoner can always reduce his sentence by at least two-thirds, and, if his wife and children have shared his exile, live *en famille* outside the prison walls. It is worthy of note that, notwithstanding the fact that the majority of these men are criminals of the worst possible type, the very scum of Odessa and St. Petersburg, crime on the island is extremely rare.

The prisons themselves are built on the same model as those of Siberia, although it has been said that the diet is insufficient, owing to the poverty of the country. Dr. Lansdell gives the scale of diet as three pounds of rye bread and a quarter of a pound of meat on three days a week, and one pound of fish and three pounds of bread the remaining four days. This certainly confirms the report that prisoners are not so well

fed at Alexandrovsk as at Tomsk and Irkoutsk. On the other hand, an English traveller, writing two or three years since to the *North China Herald*, contends that the Sakhalin convicts are comfortably housed and well treated. "They live," he says, "in barracks, which from the outside appeared to be large, airy, and commodious. One evening we went to one of them, in which about a thousand convicts were ranged in the courtyard. We passed round the building and saw that, for ventilation and comfort, arrangements of the most complete kind had been made. The conclusion we arrived at was that contentment prevailed throughout, even the convicts giving no evidence of discontent." The writer does not, however, allude to the quantity and quality of the food supplied, and, as no reliable statistics have been furnished me on this point, I cannot further enlighten the reader.

It is even more difficult to escape from Sakhalin than Siberia; for the runaway has not only sentries, iron bars, and frozen wastes to contend with. Every native Gilyak is an amateur

gaoler, who may earn a fixed reward of ten roubles by recapturing a fugitive. Convicts, however, have been known to get away, undeterred by the knowledge that failure and capture are the almost inevitable results of attempted flight, and that, if caught by the savage and cruel Gilyak, they may expect scant mercy. With every man's hand against him, the escaped exile's chief difficulty is that of procuring food in these sterile regions. Dr. Lansdell relates that, in 1880, out of a hundred who had run away, thirty were caught by the Gilyaks, and one case of cannibalism had taken place among the starving fugitives.

Winter is the season usually chosen for escape, when the mainland may be reached on foot across the frozen Nevski Straits. But even when these have been safely traversed, and the runaway steps on Siberian soil, he is nearly as badly off as before, save in the matter of food, which he can always be sure of obtaining after dark in every village.* The time of year, too, is unfavourable. The "escape season" in Siberia

* See chap. iv. p. 34.

proper, when the great army of brodyags * moves slowly and secretly westward towards Europe, is in summer-time, for no experienced convict would think of facing the Arctic cold of a Siberian winter. Recapture in a few days, if not hours, is therefore generally the Sakhalin refugee's fate, unless, indeed, he be frozen to death or buried in a snowstorm in the meantime. In summer, convicts sometimes try to escape from Sakhalin by making a raft of trees and putting to sea, trusting to chance to be picked up by some friendly vessel or American whaler. Ships of any kind, however, are rare in these latitudes, and the probability is that the majority of these poor waifs perish, either by drowning or starvation.

The following table, showing the number of exiles of all grades sent to the island of Sakhalin during the last four years, may interest the reader:—

* Vagabonds.

NUMBER OF CRIMINAL AND VOLUNTARY EXILES TRANSPORTED TO SAKHALIN.

(Viâ Odessa and Vladivostok.) *

Years.	Convicts.		Voluntary Exiles.		Total.
	Men.	Women.	Women.	Children.	
1887	1050	107	80	162	1399
1888	1050	106	81	181	1418
1889	1057	110	120	226	1513
1890	1050	89	44	85	1268

* For table of Siberian exiles by land, see Appendix.

CHAPTER IX.

A SIBERIAN PRISON.

I AROSE at daybreak, apprehensive that even my friend Galtine was not to be trusted after my interview of last night. Passing the saloon to go on deck, I looked in. The place reeked of drink and stale cigarette-smoke, while several empty champagne bottles lay strewn about the oilcloth, from which I surmised, and correctly, that it would be eight or nine o'clock before the landing of the exiles.

A steady drizzle is falling. The decks are wet and sloppy, while the leaden sky looks as if rain had set in for the next twenty-four hours at least. We are moored off a steep bank of black mud. A few yards inland a rough, unpainted wooden palisade, eighteen to twenty feet high,

encloses a yard where the prisoners are received on landing. The imperial eagle, carved in wood, is over the gateway, and a black-and-white sentry-



AN ESCORT SOLDIER.

box stands at each corner. The latter are this morning occupied by grey-coated Cossacks with loaded rifles—a somewhat useless precaution, seeing that, as yet, there is no one inside the

building. Next to it are the office and warehouses of the steamboat company. Where will they not advertise next? On the walls are two large, gaudily painted advertisements of "Singer's sewing machines," in Russian!

Tomsk is not visible. On a clear day its white houses and tapering fire-towers may be seen, clustering round the golden dome of the cathedral, for miles away; but to-day objects a few yards distant are shrouded in dense fog. A rough, uneven track, cut by the wheels of caravan carts, leads from the landing stage to the city, across an arid, treeless plain eight miles in circumference, swept in summer by dense clouds of dust, in winter knee-deep in mud and mire. In June and July this plain presents a lively, animated appearance, the whole of the overland tea traffic passing through it; but in autumn, and on dark wintry days, it would be hard to conceive a more gloomy, depressing landscape—chiefly, perhaps, from association, for this dreay waste is the commencement of the weary journey of two thousand miles to the gold and silver mines

and penal settlements of Eastern Siberia. Steam, the last connecting link with Europe and civilization, is here at an end, and convicts have told me that, at first, this fact causes them to realize the more keenly their melancholy position. On the return to Europe, to hear, for the first time, the shrill shriek of a steamer's whistle is like awakening to a new life.

The cabin clock strikes eight. It is damp and cheerless on deck. There are as yet no signs of life on board the barge, so I return to the cold and draughty saloon. A dirty, dishevelled steward, who is cleaning up and removing the remnants of last night's carouse, informs me that every one left the boat while I was asleep. "You are the only passenger left on board," he adds almost reproachfully, as I send him grumbling away to the galley for a glass of tea, with which he presently returns, accompanied by Galtine in full uniform. The convoy, says the latter, is to land in half an hour.

The governor of the Peresilni presently joins us, and a little before nine o'clock we enter the

receiving yard, which, at first sight, resembles a cattle market, with its open sheds and railed enclosures. The yard is bisected by a stout wooden barrier, at the farther end of which is a kind of pen (for this exactly describes it) for the prison governor and his staff, the commander of the convoy, and a doctor. The sheds, which are roomy and weather-proof, run down three sides of the building. They will be wanted to-day, for the drizzling rain of the morning has turned to a steady downpour, which is rapidly converting the slushy quagmire in which we are standing into one large lake.

We follow the governor and prison officials into the pen-like enclosure. Just in front of the latter is a narrow wicket through which convicts under sentence will presently pass, one by one, for the purpose of identification. Sentries are posted at intervals round the yard, along the barrier, and outside, down the narrow gangway to the prison hulk. "Gotòva,"* cries Galtine, at a sign from the governor; and the cry is taken

* "Ready."

up by each sentry in turn till it reaches the barge. In a few moments the hum of voices and faint clank of chains is heard. Then the heavy doors are thrown wide open, and the long grey procession files slowly and silently into the yard, taking up a position on the right hand of the barrier, the opposite side being kept free for those who have already undergone examination. There is barely room for a third of the number under the sheds, which are almost entirely occupied by women and children. The remainder stand bareheaded in the pitiless rain, ankle-deep in mud and water, awaiting their turn at the wicket. "Put on your caps, boys," cries the governor, when the gates have closed upon the last stragglers. Then the work of identification commences.

It is a sad, impressive scene: the grey-clad convicts shivering in the rain, the pallid, anxious-looking women and children huddled together for warmth and shelter, the dull lowering sky, and sombre uniforms of the escort. But for the occasional clank of a leg chain, the quickly hushed whimper of a child, you might almost

hear a pin drop as Galtine proceeds to call the roll.

"Jacob Hartz."

A tall, cadaverous-looking fellow, in leg chains, with Jewish features and half-shaven head, splashes up to the wicket.

"Here!"

With a hasty glance at the man's face, Galtine compares the original with a photograph glued to a corner of his identification paper.*

"Native of Riga; crime: robbery and murder; sentence: penal servitude for life at the mines of Nertchinsk."

"That's me," says the Jew, with a grin, showing a set of yellow, fang-like teeth, and limping through the gateway into the narrow enclosure. A kettle is slung to his belt, and he carries a loaf of white bread, soaked and soddened with rain, evidently purchased that morning.

* Identification by means of photographs has been established to check the "exchange system." Formerly A, sentenced to a short term of imprisonment, would become B, a convict perhaps for life, for a sum of money, or its equivalent in drink or clothes. This is now impossible.

"Ivan Louborski; native of Warsaw; sentenced, with Hartz, to same term for same crime. Kharosho: Stoupai!" *

Ivan, armed with a huge piece of salt fish and a cream cheese, joins his mate and accomplice under the shed, where they seat themselves, and proceed to make a hearty meal, sublimely indifferent to their surroundings.

"You lose no time, at any rate," says the governor, addressing them; but the joke falls rather flat among the convicts.

"They are afraid of being starved on the road," cries a wag in the crowd, a remark which appears to amuse his comrades vastly. I am expecting to see this ill-timed jester singled out for summary punishment; but, though it is at their expense, the governor and his officials seem to enjoy the buffoonery and banter as much as the exiles. This is not the first time that I have noticed this good fellowship or *camaraderie* between Russian prisoners and their guards.

By the time all the convicts have passed

* "All right; move on!"

examination, it is nearly ten o'clock. The voluntary exiles follow. These are merely numbered, and are mostly women, some with children at the breast and curly-headed babies clinging to their skirts. The politicals do not undergo this ordeal, but are at once taken in telegas to the forwarding prison, on landing. The rain has now ceased, and, as we leave the yard, a shred of sunlit blue in the woolly grey sky gives promise of a fine day. A row of telegas is drawn up at the gate. Half a dozen are packed with grey linen bags; the remainder await the sick, and women and children. There are also three or four droshkis, or street cabs, who have come out from Tomsk on the chance of a fare back to the town. Securing one of the latter, I return to the prisoners, now drawn up in a double line preparatory to marching off.

"Now, boys," cries the governor, when all is ready, "has any one a complaint to make?"

"I have, your Excellency."

A short, thick-set old man, with keen brown



LEAVING THE LANDING-STAGE FOR TOMSK.

eyes and a long reddish-grey beard, steps forward, and points with a skinny, trembling forefinger at a fellow-convict. "That blackguard there borrowed a rouble of me at Sourgout, and refuses to repay it." A howl of derision runs down the line. "Don't believe him, Excellency; he is a dog of a Jew." "He stole my kalatchi." "Give him a taste of the birch.""

"Silence!" roars the governor, lighting a cigarette. "Come here and explain yourself. What is your name?"

"Ivan Know-nothing," is the reply.

"Ah! I thought as much. A brodyag, eh? Your mates don't seem over fond of you. Galtine, do you know this man?"

"As the most troublesome and incorrigible on board. He has twice been punished since leaving Tiumen for theft of rations."

"Fall in with the rest," says the governor, sternly, "and think yourself lucky to escape the black cell. I shall remember you, my friend, next 'Cuckoo season.'" * And the old brodyag

* See p. 341.

slinks back crestfallen to the ranks, amidst cries of "Well done, old Judas!" "Better luck next time," and other facetious remarks, to which, however, the old rascal seems supremely indifferent.

One of the voluntary exiles, an elderly, respectable-looking woman, next approaches, and, in a low, almost inaudible voice, addresses the governor. Her son, a delicate-looking lad, about seventeen or eighteen years old, is condemned to the mines, with deprivation of all rights, for the murder of a child under circumstances of exceptional brutality. Poor soul! Suffering, fatigue, and anxiety have scored deep cruel lines in a face that, in happier days, must have been almost beautiful. She implores that her boy's leg irons may be removed before the march commences. "He is ill and weak," she sobs; "and, Excellency, he is all I have left in the world." The doctor is summoned, and pronounces the lad sound and strong enough to bear the burden. It is evident, however, that my ill-mannered friend of last night has a

soft spot in his heart. "Never mind, matoushka," * he whispers, so low that even I, who stand beside him, can barely catch the words: "I will take the responsibility. They shall be struck off to-night;" as, indeed, to my certain knowledge, they were.

The medical inspection now takes place. A score or so of complaints and petitions follow. Some are granted, others refused; others, again, reserved for future consideration. The soldiers then fall in at the head, sides, and rear of the convoy; the word of command is given, and the straggling grey column moves slowly away across the marshy waste, to the dismal accompaniment of clanking chains and rumbling telegas, towards Tomsk. The long journey across Asia has commenced. Women, children, and sick are in carts. No child under the age of fifteen years is, under any circumstances, *compelled* to march.

The sun is shining in a cloudless sky when, an hour later, I set out for the forwarding prison.

* Little mother.

The air is keen and exhilarating, and the drive would be pleasant enough but for the road, which is almost impassable, owing to the heavy rains, while the isvostchik * and I are compelled, more than once, to alight and haul the rickety, cushionless old cab out of the deep ruts and furrows. There are no signs of cultivation on the plain, the land being exclusively used for grazing. Some horses, cattle, and sheep are dotted about its level, wide-spreading surface, but the pasture is poor and withered up by the scorching heat of a Siberian summer.

On my return to England in 1887, I was often asked the question, "Did you not find it very cold in Siberia?" As a matter of fact, I have never suffered so much from heat, even in the tropics, but this was on a previous occasion, in the month of August. The climate from the middle of September to the end of October is delicious, and not unlike that of the Riviera in December. On the present occasion, the highest reading of my thermometer, taken

* Cabman.

at mid-day, was 88° Fahr. ; the lowest, 50° Fahr. ; though nearing Europe, towards November, it became too cold to be pleasant.

There are three prisons in Tomsk—the Goubernski, the Arestantski, and the Peresilni. The latter, or forwarding prison, which we are about to visit, is that in which all political and criminal exiles, passing through Tomsk to a more distant place, are confined. Convicts condemned to imprisonment at Tomsk are kept in the Goubernski, a large stone building situated some little way out of the city. The Arestantski is also used for stationary prisoners, undergoing shorter terms of imprisonment. I inspected all three, but shall confine myself to a description of the two former. Suffice it to say that the Arestantski, though smaller, is as clean throughout, and as well-conducted in every respect, as the Goubernski, or principal town prison, which would do credit to almost any European city.

The Peresilni, or forwarding prison, is situated on the outskirts of Tomsk, on a sandy plain,

north-east of the town. It consists of a number of low, unpainted log buildings, overtopped and concealed by a high wooden palisade, which encloses the three or four acres of ground on which the prison stands. From the outside, therefore, nothing is visible but a rough-looking wooden stockade, and the bright green spire of a chapel which occupies the centre of the enclosure. But for armed soldiers and black-and-white sentry boxes, one would never take the Tomsk Peresilni for a prison at all. Its exterior is far more suggestive of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show.

It is three o'clock. The massive iron-bound gates have just closed on Galtine's convoy as I drive up. The entrance to the prison is crowded with noisy, chattering market women, who, judging from their empty baskets, have done a good morning's work with the convicts. A yellow-haired, red-faced Cossack sentry, in dirty white linen tunic and dark green breeches stuffed into a rusty pair of high boots, is engaged in a running fire of chaff and repartee with the sturdy peasant dames, but, on seeing me, brings his

Berdan rifle to the charge and inquires my business. An iron-barred wicket then flies open in response to his knock, and my pass is handed through to the chief gaoler. It is under this official's guidance that I subsequently visit the prison. The governor and Galtine have already left, the former giving instructions that in the event of my requiring information or assistance, he is to be immediately recalled.

"You would perhaps prefer to talk French," says my guide, relocking the great gate. The gaoler is a red-faced, jolly-looking old fellow, with a merry twinkling eye and bristling white moustache. "There is a man here who speaks the language well," he adds. "I will fetch him to accompany us round the prison." So saying, he leaves me to disappear into the dim recesses of one of the low barrack-like buildings. His absence affords me an opportunity of examining and taking notes of my surroundings.

A vast court-yard, unpaved and, in places, grass-grown. Several narrow plank pathways sunk into the muddy ground, lead from the main

entrance of the prison to the various wooden barracks, of which there are eighteen, rough-looking but substantially built, and scattered about the yard with no attempt at order or regularity. The absence of colour of any kind is striking. Ground, houses, stockade, are all of a dull dead drab. Notwithstanding the now blue sky and brilliant sunshine, the *coup d'œil* is depressing in the extreme, though enlivened to a certain extent by the clean-looking, white-washed chapel, and, near it, an open shed containing four fire-engines, glistening with brass and varnish and painted a brilliant red. A corner of the yard is evidently kept apart as a drying ground, and linen garments of all shapes and sizes, suspended from clothes-lines, flutter in the breeze. A rather larger building than the rest is on the left of the entrance. Over its doors (of which there are two) are black boards bearing the words, in large white letters, "АПТЕКА"* and "КОНТОРА."† On the right of the gateway is a small guard-house. To a

* Pharmacy. † Office.

stranger, the guard kept for the preservation of order at this establishment seems almost ludicrous. There are never more than twenty soldiers on duty at the same time in the Tomsk Peresilni, though the number of prisoners occasionally exceeds two thousand!

I note with some surprise that, although the large square windows are securely barred, the doors of every building are thrown wide open. The yard is thronged with men and women strolling or lounging about, and seated on the doorsteps of the log huts, chatting and joking, and, in some cases, smoking. In many I recognize old acquaintances from the barge, who smile and nod; but the majority of the faces around are strange to me. Galtine's convoy had arrived before its time, and there are consequently over two thousand prisoners in the Peresilni. All the men are in grey prison dress, but many of the women, and all the children, wear peasant garb. The hum of conversation is incessant, broken only occasionally by the clink of iron as some fettered convict crosses the yard. At intervals a snatch

of song or sound of laughter issues from the barred but open windows of some kamera. I search in vain for the misery, squalor, and filth of which I have read so much, the horrors with which we have been regaled *ad nauseam* in the English and American press. The interior of a French or English gaol is far more grim and forbidding than this open-air prison, where iron discipline and the maddening silence of solitary confinement are apparently replaced by the society of both sexes, freedom of speech, and cigarette-smoking!

The gaoler presently returns, accompanied by a convict in linen shirt and trousers and long grey frieze overcoat. He is bare-headed and wears leg fetters,* a tall, good-looking man about

* "The manner of carrying the fetters is as follows:—Over the leg is worn a coarse woollen stocking, and over that a piece of thick linen cloth. Then come the trousers, over which is bound, on the shins, a pad of leather. When the leg is bare it has no marks from wearing the irons. On each leg is a ring, not locked, but *riveted*. To these rings is attached a chain of about three feet in length, which for convenience in walking is usually suspended in the middle by a string from the waist" (*Through Siberia*, p. 85).

thirty years old, with expressive blue eyes, clear-cut features, and a fair moustache. Notwithstanding the ill-fitting prison dress, chains, and half-shaven head, his manners are those of a gentleman. The poor fellow reddens slightly under his tanned skin as he bows and addresses me in, evidently, his own language. "Oui, monsieur, je suis français, Il n'y en a pas beaucoup en Sibérie!" he adds, smiling sadly, repeating the remark in Russian to the gaoler, with whom he appears to be on friendly terms. I am somewhat apprehensive that this triangular dialogue is to be carried on throughout, but am soon relieved to find that the official is entirely indifferent to our conversation. My visit lasted two hours, during which time I was frequently left quite alone with my strange guide and the other prisoners.

The Tomsk Peresilni is constructed to accommodate two thousand prisoners. It contained, the day of my visit, 2176, including voluntary exiles and their children. I was told that, on one occasion, two or three years ago, as many

as three thousand convicts were located in the prison, on account of floods between Tomsk and Irkoutsk. But such an occurrence is extremely rare. The average number is from eighteen hundred to two thousand. As I have already remarked, its crowded state to-day was caused by the premature arrival of Galtine's convoy.

I must have visited eight or ten of the log huts or barracks, taking them haphazard, and myself leading the way. Each building contained two kameras, divided by a narrow passage. The divisions of the rooms differed but little throughout, the two I actually measured being eighty-three feet long by forty-two feet wide and fourteen feet high, and seventy-two feet long by forty feet wide and ten feet high respectively. As at Moscow, wooden sleeping platforms ran down the centre, and in some cases round three sides of the wards. In the corner of each was suspended an ikon, or sacred image. Each kamera had at least four large windows, which, as well as the doors, are thrown wide open during the daytime in summer, so

that there is no lack of light and air. I did not, however, notice any other appliances for ventilation. The flooring, though in some places old and worm-eaten, was fairly clean, considering the number of muddy feet that had passed over it that morning; while the walls, though disfigured as usual to a certain height with scratched and pencilled inscriptions, were also clean, but not newly whitewashed. In winter each room is heated with a large stove. In one of the kameras half a dozen convicts were employed cleaning and sweeping, and this is the only labour of any kind that I saw going on in the prison.

Though many of the wards were almost empty, their inmates having sought the air and sunshine, two or three were fully occupied by prisoners who had just been assigned their quarters. One of these, about seventy feet long by thirty feet wide, must have contained nearly one hundred male convicts, and it was not without difficulty that I managed to force my way through the packed and serried ranks and take the dimen-

sions of the place. The clamour was deafening, while the clanking of chains, fighting and struggling for places, and shouting and laughter, converted the kamera into a veritable pandemonium.

The stout, apoplectic little gaoler shouted himself blue in the face, but in vain. His cries of "Smirno!"* were drowned in the hubbub, and it was only when the noisier spirits at the further end of the room had caught sight of the green-and-gold uniform that order was restored. I noticed nothing, however, but good-humoured chaff and horse-play throughout this scene. It reminded one of a parcel of rowdy schoolboys broken loose, but there was nothing horrible or repulsive about it. I returned to the kamera when its inmates had settled down, and the order was given to lie on the platforms. Though tightly packed there was enough room for each man. I have seen it stated that convicts are in some cases compelled to sleep under these sleeping-places.† That this is not the case at

* Attention!

† "In most of the cells there was not room enough on the

Tomsk was pretty evident, for I examined three of these "nari"* by crawling on my hands and knees to the centre of each, and found the flooring thick with dust.

"Overcrowding is the chief fault of the Siberian exile system," says my guide in French, as we cross the yard to one of the female kameras. "Were it not for that, there would not be much to complain of."

The gaoler having left us for a few moments, I venture to inquire how long my companion has been in Siberia.

"Not long," is the answer. "I was sent from Moscow last summer, and have been here ever since. Next week I am to go on to Irkoutsk, and shall not be sorry. Life on the road is hard in bad weather, but pleasant enough in fine, if a man is strong and well. There is change, too. One sees new scenes and fresh faces."

"When were you last in France?"

sleeping-platforms for all of the convicts, and scores of men slept every night under the 'nari'" (*Siberia*, by George Kennan. Osgood M'Ilvaine, London. 1891).

* Sleeping platforms.

"I left Paris in July, 1886, to come to Russia. For three years prior to that I was book-keeper at an hotel not a hundred yards from the Rue de Rivoli. You probably know it well. Many English go there. Would to God I had never left it!" adds the poor fellow with quivering lip, while, at this moment, the gaoler reappears on the scene, and puts an end to our conversation.

The women's kameras are similar in every respect to those of the men, perhaps being less crowded, a trifle cleaner, if anything. The ones I visited contained both criminal and free exiles. The former rose as we entered and made us a waist bow.* Many of the latter were employed, knitting, sewing, or washing linen. The children looked clean, rosy, and well.

"Well, mother," said the gaoler kindly, addressing a young, but thin and haggard woman in grey prison dress, who sat apart from the

* The prisoner's salute in Russia and Siberia, made by bending the body forward almost at right angles from the waist.

rest, "how are we to-day? Why don't you go out in the sunshine, instead of moping here?"

"She's never got over its death and never will," says one of the women in a low tone. "It seems to have turned her brain."

"A sad story," says the gaoler as we leave the building. "She was brought here two years ago, and shortly afterwards gave birth to a child in this prison. Everybody loved the baby, a pretty, blue-eyed little thing, always laughing. Last week it died, and the day after the mother was pardoned. Poor girl! We can't even make her understand that she is free."

"You say that she came here two years ago. Are prisoners often kept at the Peresilni for such a long term?"

"Very rarely. This woman is a native of Nijni-Novgorod, and was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment in the prison of Krasnoyarsk. After the birth of the child she begged to be allowed to remain on here for a couple of months, and, being a quiet, well-behaved girl, the authorities granted her request. So it has been ever since,

from month to month and year to year. But such a case does not occur once in ten years."

Having visited the kitchens, which, though primitive, are clean and well arranged, we pass on to the bath-houses, which are spacious and in good order. There are two—one for men, the other for women, and each capable of accommodating thirty prisoners at a time. There was a constant supply of cold water. Convicts are permitted to bathe as often as they please in the latter, but the regular Russian bath (very similar in principle to the Turkish) is only provided twice a week.

The hospital, a two-storied building,* adjoins this building. "There are two cases of small-pox and one of typhus in the infectious ward," said the gaoler; "perhaps you would rather not go in;" but his words only whetted my curiosity. This is evidently the black spot of the Peresilni. But, as usual, I am agreeably disappointed. A light airy room, large sash windows, with blinds and shutters, a score of iron bedsteads (three of

* The Peresilni hospital is visited by a doctor attached to the prison.

them occupied) ranged against either wall, and a couple of nurses in neat black dresses and white aprons in attendance. The larger infirmary, some distance away, contains eighty beds, which may, in case of overcrowding, be conveniently increased to one hundred. At the head of every bed was a metal label indicating the patient's disease. Of the fifty odd cases, quite a third were suffering from rheumatism and phthisis. The dispensary, hard by, was spacious and well stocked, while the doctor who conducted us round seemed to take pride in the cleanliness and comfort of his infirmary, and complacently pointed out the snowy bed-linen, dainty food, of which two or three patients were partaking, and admirable arrangements for ventilation.

And yet we find in Prince Krapotkine's work ("In Russian and French Prisons" *) that in this very infirmary "the shrieks of the sick, the cries of the fever-stricken patients, and the rattle of

* London: Ward and Downey, 1887. I may further mention that this is the hospital which (according to the *Century Magazine*) "is so saturated with contagious disease that it is unfit for use."

the dying mix together with the jokes and laughter of the prisoners and curses of the warders. . . . You are suffocated as you enter the room. You are fainting, and must run back to breathe some fresh air!"

Two of the huts in the Tomsk Peresilni are set apart for political prisoners. These buildings (unlike those occupied by criminals) are kept locked night and day, the inmates being only permitted to take exercise round the yard at stated hours, generally after sundown, when the criminal convicts have been locked up for the night.

"There is a young man here who speaks French," says my convict guide in Russian, as the gaoler draws back the heavy iron bar; "we will see him first."

"You won't get much out of *him*," says the gaoler, with a laugh. "He is as sulky as a bear."

As in other prisons, the "political" cells are constructed to contain only one person. There are to-day four men and two women. I recognize one of the former as my old friend, the

student of "Pickwick" on the barge. He informs me that he is to be transferred to-morrow to the Goubernski, or town gaol, but for six months only. He may then reside in the town in comparative freedom. One of the women, a short-haired, masculine-looking female, complains bitterly of the draughts, and is forthwith ordered a couple of extra blankets by the doctor, who has accompanied us from the hospital. She seems little grateful for the favour, however, and murmurs something about a screen. "There is no pleasing these people," sighs the doctor.

We then visit the youth, "as sulky as a bear," who speaks French. He is an attenuated, pimply youth, about twenty-two years old, dressed in a brown check suit and brilliant red necktie. As we enter, he jumps to his feet and surveys us with a wild, defiant stare. The little wooden table is littered with cigarettes, which he has been rolling, with a mould, from a large piece of Turkish tobacco.

"Are you comfortable here?" I ask.

"Non; on est très mal," is the reply, which

elicits a chuckle and an "I told you so," from the old gaoler.

"What do you complain of? Do not they give you meat and white bread?"

"Yes."

"And kvas?"

"Yes"—with a wry face.

"And are you not permitted to read, smoke, and buy anything you please except alcohol."

"Oui, mais on est très mal!"

"Cannot you tell me more explicitly what you complain of, and I may perhaps be able to draw the governor's attention to your grievances?"

"Je vous ai déjà dit: on est très mal. Voilà tout!" and, with an impatient gesture, the amiable youth turns his face to the wall.

This young gentleman had committed an offence which would, in England, have sent him to penal servitude for twenty years at least. His sentence (mitigated on account of his youth) was banishment for life to Irkoutsk, in Eastern Siberia, where, after a two years' sojourn in the central prison, he will be free to take up any

profession or occupation he pleases. In what other country in the world would he have been treated as leniently?

With regard to the foregoing interview, the following paragraph from Prince Krapotkine's "In Russian and French Prisons" deserves notice:—

"You may be permitted to visit a number of cells for 'secret' or 'political' cases; and if you question the inmates, you will certainly be told by them that they are quite satisfied with everything."

Unlike the thickly padded stone walls of the fortress of SS. Peter and Paul,* the wooden partitions of the Tomsk Peresilni afford excellent opportunities for communication between the political cells. This is done by rapping. The system is very simple, and soon learned (even in prison, and without any previous knowledge) by the veriest novice. An imaginary diagram is formed, divided into squares like a draught-board, each square representing a letter of the

* See Appendix A.

alphabet. The number of raps indicate, first, the horizontal line, then the perpendicular. Thus:—

A	B	C	D	E
F	G	H	I	J

To spell the word "age"—

A rap—pause—a rap .. .. .. A
Two raps—pause—two raps .. .. G
Five raps—pause—a rap .. .. .. E

Again—

Two raps—pause—a rap .. .. .. B
Five raps—pause—a rap .. .. .. E
Four raps—pause—a rap .. .. .. D

And so on to the end of the alphabet.

Another cell was occupied by a Jew—a stout, pale-faced individual about forty, bald-headed and black-bearded, with a smiling, cringing manner, a type of which hundreds may be seen any fine summer's day on the Brighton Parade, or by night in the less reputable resorts of the English metropolis. The man, who was faultlessly dressed,

was politeness itself, and welcomed us with effusion, but there was a restless, savage look in his dark eyes, whenever they met the gaoler's, that boded little good for that individual should he ever find himself at the Israelite's mercy. The latter had just finished a meal, and was smoking a large, strong-flavoured German cigar. On the table lay the remains of his dinner, a piece of stewed beef, with onions and potatoes, and some white bread. A samovar and teapot diffused a fragrant odour of tea throughout the cell.

"When do I go on the road, gaoler?" says the Jew, when greetings and compliments had been exchanged.

"Not for another ten days at least; perhaps not then; so you need not worry yourself."

"It's really too bad," rejoins the "political." "Here have I been for a whole month. Let me walk, if there are no telegas; anything to get out of this cursed hole. The season will soon be over, then here I shall be for the whole winter."

"You are better off here than at Karâ," retorts the gaoler, with a grin. "It is his second visit

to the mines," he adds, as soon as we are out of earshot. "That's one of the most dangerous Nihilists in Russia."

"Were you ever employed at Karâ or Nertchinsk?" I ask.

"Five years at the silver mines. I have been to Karâ, but never officially."

"Is Nertchinsk healthy?"

"Extremely so. The death rate is low, and there has been no epidemic there for the last fifteen years."

"What are the working hours at the mines?"

"Eleven hours a day in summer, in winter ten hours. This includes meal-times and school hours. There is no work at all on Sundays. Besides this, there are also about thirty saints' days yearly, when work is suspended. The anniversaries of the birth and coronation of the Czar and Czarina are also holidays."*

A warder here came up and summoned the

* "They" (the prisoners) "have only two holidays a year—Christmas and Easter; all the other days, Sundays included, they must toil until exhausted nature robs them of the use of their limbs" ("The Russians of To-day," p. 235).

gaoler on business. "I must ask you to excuse me for a quarter of an hour. Please go where you will. Our friend here is entirely at your orders."

"Was he speaking the truth about the mines?" I ask, when once more alone with the convict.

"Yes; so far as I know. As you are aware, I have never been there myself, but have picked up a good deal of information from exiles who have, and who say that the life there is much the same as here, although, of course, the work is harder. I have taken a good deal of interest in the subject, for Karà is my ultimate destination," adds my companion somewhat dejectedly.

"Can a convict make money at the mines?"

"He may; but few do, save by illicit gold-washing. Prisoners receive ten per cent. on the produce of their work. They may also (their obligatory labour over) work on their own account if they are living in the 'reform class,' *i.e.* provisional liberty.* At the expiration of his term of imprisonment, a man becomes a 'colonist' (silno-poselenetz), and is registered as such in

* See Appendix E.

one of the rural communes in Eastern Siberia. The Government allows him as much land as he is able to cultivate, and this ultimately becomes his own property."

"Do convicts ever escape from the mines?"

"Hundreds. Indeed, it is almost a recognized custom in the summer season, when the fine warm weather renders life in the taiga* perfectly practicable. The convicts call it joining 'General Koukoushka's army,' for it is only in spring, when the cry of the cuckoo is heard, that prisoners who have succeeded in eluding their guards take to the woods, and commence the weary tramp westward towards Europe. They seldom get out of Siberia, but in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred are brought back the following autumn as brodyags, under another name. The authorities know them perfectly by the ridiculous cognomens they assume, such as, 'Ivan Know-nothing,' 'Fedor No-mind,' 'Karl Can't-remember,' etc. There are at least a hundred such in this very prison, returning to

* Siberian forest.

the mines, in some cases for the third or fourth time. The majority are men of the 'reform class,' for whom escape is naturally much easier than those actually within prison walls." *

"How do they live?"

"On roots and berries principally. There are also many edible fungi. At night they can always be sure of a hearty meal of rye bread and milk at any of the villages, so they never stray far from the great post road.† There are many incentives to escape, for a runaway convict frequently shortens his original sentence by many years. Take, for instance, the case of a man sentenced to twenty years at the mines of Karâ. He escapes, becomes a brodyag, and, a few months later, is recaptured near Tomsk or Krasnoyarsk, in Western Siberia. Interrogated by the police, he feigns ignorance, forgets

* The Rev. Henry Lansdell gives (in "Through Siberia") the following numbers of convicts who, living free, ran away from Karâ during the following years:—1870, 483; 1871, 326; 1872, 368; 1873, 585; 1874, 321; 1875, 242; 1876, 175; 1877, 256; 1878, 194.

† See p. 84.

everything, his occupation, destination, even his name. Finally he is sentenced to three years' imprisonment (with or without hard labour) for being without papers. Should ill-luck send him back to his old quarters at Karâ, he is severely punished. If, as often happens, he is merely confined in an adjacent gaol, he may, if not recognized in the mean time, be released in a couple of years and travel back to Russia with his passport *en règle*, and the inward satisfaction of having got off more than fifteen years of his original sentence." *

"How are convicts flogged?"

"With the birch invariably, although the plête is still used occasionally at Sakhalin and Nertchinsk. A man was birched here only yesterday. I have no doubt the gaoler will show you the instrument, if it has not been destroyed.†

* M. Reclus goes as far as to say that sometimes the authorities, in times of difficulty, or when ordinary labourers fail, call in the help of vagabonds (brodyags), with the tacit understanding that they will not ask for their passports, whereupon hundreds emerge from the surrounding forests and present themselves for employment ("Through Siberia," p. 466).

† This birch is now in my possession. It is precisely

It was now nearly five o'clock. We had during this conversation visited the chapel and fire-engine shed. The yard was now nearly deserted, most of the convicts having retired to the kameras for the evening meal. Some, however, still paced to and fro. Others were assisting the free women in the drying yard, playing with the children, or chatting in groups. I noticed, with one of the latter, a soldier in friendly conversation, and commented on the fact to the gaoler, who had just returned. "A strange sight, eh?" said the old man, laughing. "Warders and prisoners hobnobbing!" Cases of assault are very rare in Siberia. There have only been three during the past eight years, two on the island of Sakhalin and one at Karâ.

"We can now dispense with your services," said the gaoler, kindly, to my guide, upon whom I pressed with some difficulty a five-rouble note. The crime for which he was sentenced was the

similar to those used at Eton. Speaking of this instrument in Siberia, the Rev. H. Lansdell says, "Those I saw reminded me of a dame's birch, save that they were longer, and the switches somewhat stouter than those formerly seen in schools."

assassination of a paramour at Odessa. The murder, committed under the influence of jealousy and drink, was now to be bitterly expiated by twenty years' hard labour and banishment at Karâ. Poor fellow! his eyes filled with tears as I shook hands and bade him good-bye. I was the last link with his far-away native land, *La belle France.*

Although it was my fixed intention to return the same evening and inspect the kameras by night, I bade the old gaoler farewell, regretting that time would not permit of my revisiting his prison. I had not, as yet, experienced "the strong peculiar odour that is characteristic of Siberian prisons," * although this prison has been described by the magazine quoted in the foot-note as one of the worst in Siberia. Nor when, towards midnight, I returned to the Peresilni and walked through its dimly lit kameras, between rows upon rows of sleeping convicts, did I detect anything beyond the effluvium arising from closely packed humanity; such a smell as one

* Vide *Century Magazine*, March, 1889.

may encounter any Saturday night in the crowded pit or gallery of one of our transpontine theatres. That the wards were in many cases overcrowded, I admit; but that the air was foul and vitiated, or in any way polluted by mephitic odours, I most emphatically deny. Indeed, there is no reason why it should have been, for every kamera having its sanitary arrangements in a small shed or outhouse adjoining, no parashas were in use. The heat in some of the rooms was excessive, but not worse than I have experienced in many a Siberian peasant's cottage, while the opening or shutting of the large square windows was left to the discretion of the convicts. I noticed, however, that in every case they were tightly closed.*

The following is the death rate of the Tomsk forwarding prison for the last four years. The reader will observe that the year 1890 is incom-

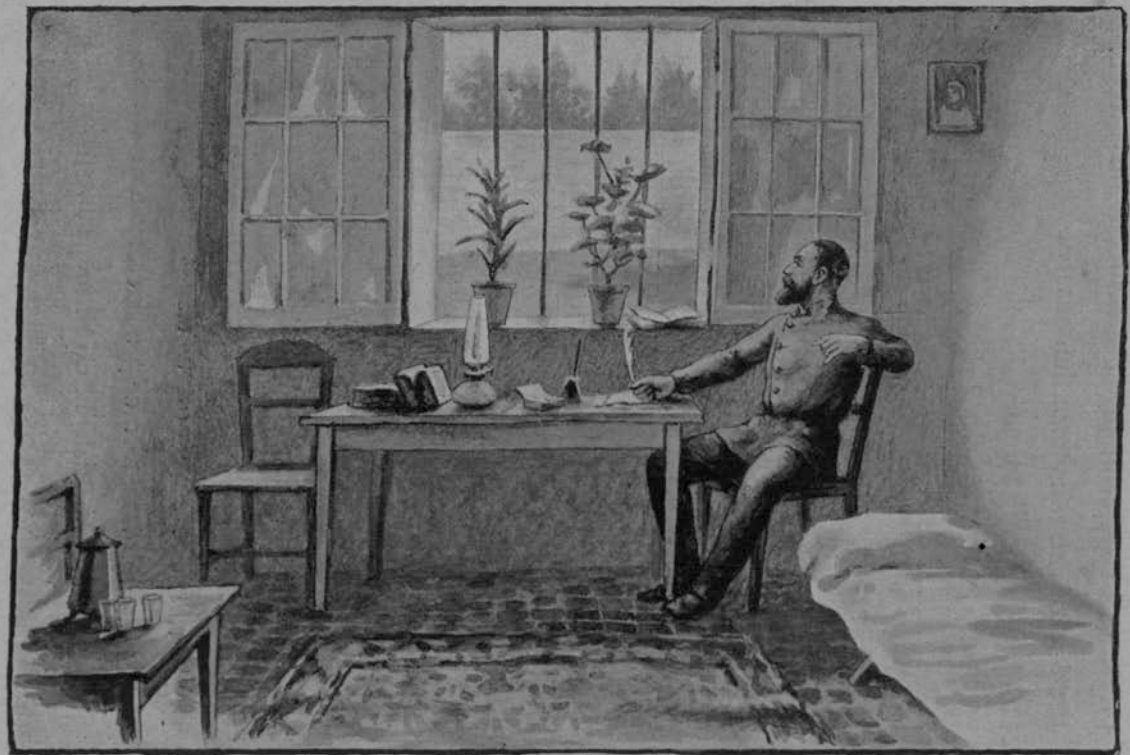
* "I may safely say that the air I breathed in the worst Russian prison was incomparably better than I had temporarily to endure in some of the peasants' houses, or which may be inhaled in many of the post-houses" (Rev. H. Lansdell, 'Through Siberia," p. 381).

plete, the report having been given me before the end of the transportation season.

TOMSK FORWARDING PRISON. DEATH RATE.

Years—	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.
Number of exiles of all denominations passed through	17,169	18,491	17,297	—
Deaths	314	228	394	177

The second day of my stay at Tomsk was devoted to an inspection of the Goubernski prison, or local gaol, a large square brick building, picturesquely situated on the summit of a hill outside the town, and overlooking the blue waters of the Tom and a fertile panorama of green pasture and maize and barley fields. This prison was purchased by the Government, in 1882, from the executors of a rich merchant, Mr. Sokólof, and was formerly a factory and dwelling-house combined. The original sum paid for the building was 1030 roubles, but repairs and additions further increased the cost to 309,408



A POLITICAL EXILE'S CELL, TOMSK.

roubles, although the fittings, furniture, bells, etc., were made by convict labour. Adjoining the Goubernski, and separated from it by a narrow roadway, is a smaller building, also of whitewashed brick. It is the prison for women. A detailed account of my inspection of the Goubernski would be wearisome, especially as the gaol contains only local malefactors, sentenced to terms of imprisonment varying from one month to five years. With the exception of a few political prisoners, exiles are never sent here. This fact will naturally deprive this prison of much, if not all interest. I will therefore curtail its description by placing before the reader a letter written at the time from Tomsk and published in the English press:—

"Tomsk, September 1st, 1890.

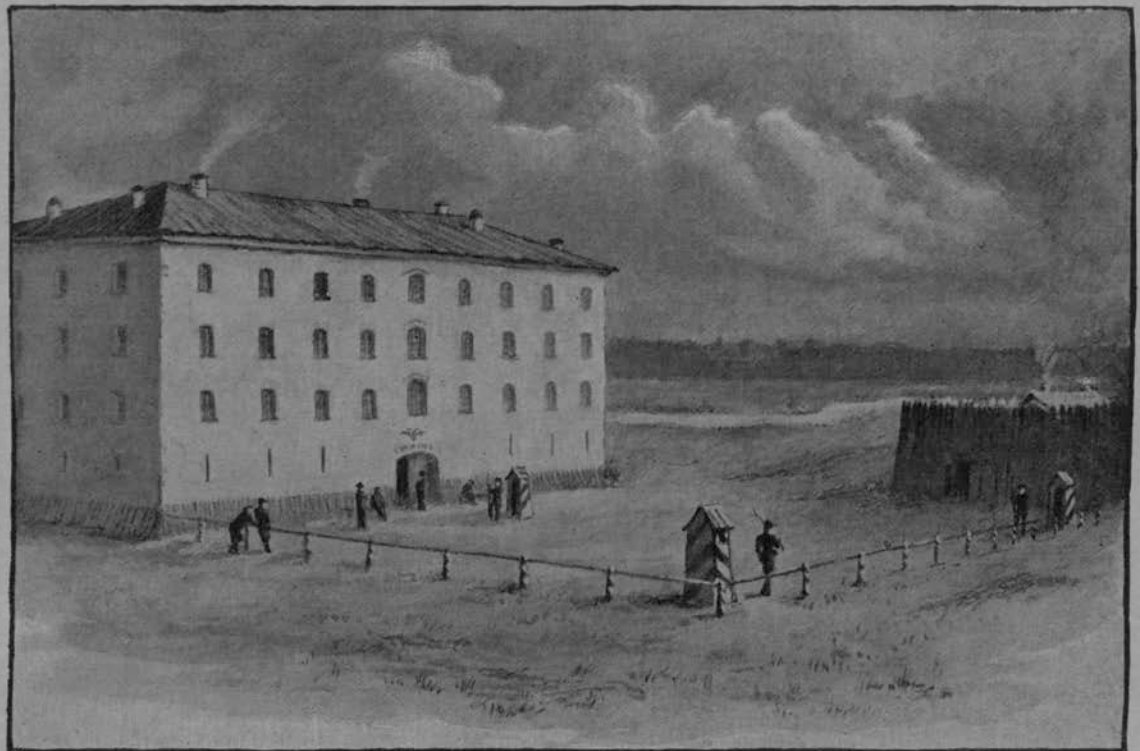
"To the Editor, *Pall Mall Gazette*, London.

"SIR,

"As some indignation has lately been felt in England on the subject of Siberian prisons, the following plain facts may be of interest. I

should first mention that permission to visit the political and criminal prisons of Tomsk, Tobolsk, and Tiumen was at once granted me, on application to the Russian authorities, without conditions as to time or duration of visit.

"On producing the necessary documents, I was at once admitted to the Goubernski prison, a large two-storied brick building, situated on the outskirts of the town of Tomsk. From the central and principal entrance, wide stone steps lead to landings on the first and second story. To the right and left of these are the kameras, or public cells. There are sixteen in all, eight on each floor. I entered and minutely examined each, and can safely assert that, so far as regards cleanliness, ventilation, and light, no prison in Europe could have been better organized. The walls were whitewashed, the wooden flooring scraped and clean, while, in each room, three large windows (looking on to a public thoroughfare) let in abundance of light and air. Most of the prisoners were employed, some tailoring, some cobbling, others cigarette-making,



THE GOUBERNSKI PRISON, TOMSK.

while a few were reading and writing; for, in Siberia, a well-behaved convict has many privileges. Many of the other wards, however, were filled with prisoners who seemed to have no work or occupation. They were sitting or lounging on the sleeping platforms, conversing, asleep, or staring moodily before them. Work of any kind here would have been a boon, and, I feel sure, welcome.*

"I should mention that the most crowded kamera I saw was eighty feet long by twenty-four feet broad, and fifteen feet high. It contained forty-one men, each of whom had his own canvas mattress and linen pillow laid out upon the sleeping platforms (seventy feet long by fourteen feet broad) that ran down the centre of the room. The sanitary arrangements were perfect. I could not detect, throughout the prison, an offensive, or even disagreeable, smell.

"The infirmary, on the upper story, consists of

* "The difficulty of employing a large number of Siberian convicts is vastly enhanced by the difficulty and the expenses of raw materials, and the comparatively small demand for manufactured articles" ("Through Siberia," p. 129).

two lofty rooms, each forty-six feet long by eighteen feet broad. The wards were made to accommodate thirty patients, but there were to-day but seventeen in all. Here again the light cheerful rooms, iron bedsteads, clean sheets, and scrupulous cleanliness would almost have done credit to a London hospital. Two or three convalescents, in flannel dressing-gowns, were strolling about the passages. As I left, broth and white bread were brought to a patient. The prison doctor attends regularly every night and morning. All infectious cases are sent to the Peresilni.

"With a parting glance at the pretty chapel, we descended to the ground floor, which consists of cells for political prisoners, four punishment cells (not dark), a stone chamber bisected by a wire grating in which prisoners can see their friends, and the kitchen and bakery. I saw but two politicals: one a journalist undergoing three months' imprisonment for a seditious article in a local newspaper; the other, for a graver offence, on his way from Kharkoff to Nertchinsk.

Both wore their own clothes. A table, chair, lamp, and iron bedstead, with linen sheets and pillow, comprised the furniture of these cells, which measured twenty feet long, sixteen feet broad, and twelve feet high. They looked (through large barred windows) on to the prison garden.

"A superficial description only is needed for the kitchen, with its clean white wall, tiled floor, huge cauldrons for soup, and bright copper saucepans; of the bakery, with its numberless ovens and rows upon rows of black and white bread. Suffice it to say that a prisoner actually receives, per diem, half a pound of meat (without bone), a large bowl of shtchi, one pound of black bread, and a basin of gruel. In addition to this, he may purchase (at his own cost) tea, pastry, cheese, tobacco, and other luxuries, with the exception of alcohol.

"Next to the Goubernski is a similar prison (also of brick and two-storied) for women. The matron, a staid, respectable person in black, conducted me round the kameras. Save that they are somewhat smaller, the latter are pre-

cisely similar to those of the Goubernski, as light, clean, well ventilated, and free from smell.

"The *Century Magazine* of 1888–89 contains a series of articles on Siberian prisons, by a Mr. George Kennan. Space will not permit of my discussing these further than as regards Tomsk prison, which, if I remember rightly, is described as being totally unfit for human habitation, a hot-bed of filth and disease, vice and immorality, engendered by overcrowding, and the promiscuous herding together, night and day, of men, women, and children. Upon the same writer's version of the treatment of political exiles, I will not now comment, but confine myself (as regards criminals) to substantial facts that have come under my own personal observation.

"As an Englishman and an unbiased witness, I trust my evidence will obtain (in England, at least) the credulity that has been given to that of Mr. Kennan, an American journalist. Judging from the present state of affairs at Tomsk, I can

only presume that a radical reform has taken place since that gentleman's visit and subsequent publications. Be this as it may, Mr. Kennan will no doubt be glad to hear that the Tomsk prison, as graphically described in the pages of the *Century Magazine*, does not exist.

"I am, sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"H. DE WINDT."

The above letter shortly afterwards elicited a reply from Mr. Kennan, which is too long to reproduce *in extenso*. The following extracts, however, will show the gist of this gentleman's communication :—

"October 18th, 1889.

"To the Editor, *Pall Mall Gazette*.

"SIR,

"In the number of the *Gazette* issued Wednesday, September 24th, 1891, there appears a letter from Mr. H. de Windt, in which that gentleman describes a visit made by him to the

Tomsk prison in Western Siberia, and in which, referring to my investigations, he says, 'Mr. Kennan will doubtless be glad to hear that the Tomsk prison, as graphically described in the pages of the *Century Magazine*, does not exist.' Will you kindly grant me space to correct an error into which Mr. de Windt has inadvertently fallen? If he will consult the latest report of the Russian prison administration which is in print, and which may be obtained without difficulty, he will find that there are two prisons in the city of Tomsk—one called the Goubernski, or provincial prison; and the other the Peresilni, or exile forwarding prison. The former is used almost exclusively as a place of detention or confinement for local offenders, while the latter is the great forwarding depôt, through which pass all exiles and convicts destined for Central and Eastern Siberia. The prison described by me in the *Century Magazine* is the exile forwarding prison, which receives and despatches eastward from ten to twelve thousand criminals every year. The prison

visited and described by Mr. de Windt is a mere place of confinement for local provincial offenders, and does not contain as many hundreds of inmates as the forwarding prison contains thousands.*

"It is a remarkable and significant fact that whenever a badly informed and credulous traveller arrives in the Siberian city of Tomsk and expresses a desire to inspect Tomsk prison, he is conducted by the amiable officials, not to the exile forwarding prison, which perhaps is the thing that he really wishes and means to see, but to the Goubernski, or provincial prison, which is nothing more than a local gaol. This was the course pursued with the Rev. H. Lansdell, and this seems to be the plan that was adopted by the Tomsk officials in their dealings with Mr. de Windt. If either of these gentlemen, however, had taken the trouble to make even the most superficial inquiry in the city outside the circle of officials, he would have been made acquainted with the distinction between the city

* This is scarcely correct.—H. DE W.

gaol and the forwarding prison, and would doubtless have asked to see the latter."

Being very much averse to entering into a paper war with Mr. Kennan (or any one else) through the medium of the newspapers, I am glad of this opportunity of explaining how I was led to infer that that gentleman, in his *Century* article, alluded, not, as was the case, to the Peresilni, but to the Goubernski prison.

My first question on arriving at the Tomsk Peresilni was, "When did Mr. Kennan visit this prison?"

The gaoler, who perhaps misunderstood me, replied, "Mr. Kennan never came here at all. He went over the other building" (the Goubernski).

Hence the mistake. Under the impression that Mr. Kennan's account dealt with the Tomsk gaol, I directed special attention to the latter, and at once wrote to contradict the erroneous impression existing anent, as I then thought, this establishment in England. Only on arrival in Paris did I discover my error, and the fact that the

Peresilni or forwarding prison, not the Goubernski, was the subject of the appalling articles in the *Century Magazine.* This was shortly afterwards made clear by Mr. Kennan's letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette,* which appears in these pages.

As a matter of fact, this misunderstanding was of little moment, for, as the reader will allow, there is little to choose between these two prisons from either an administrative or sanitary point of view. Should these pages, however, meet Mr. Kennan's eye, he will, I trust, understand how I was misled, and will perhaps give me the credit of being a little less "badly informed and credulous" than he originally supposed.

Behind the Goubernski prison, and under its very walls, is a large well-kept garden with gay flower-beds, shady arbours, and smooth shaven lawns, surrounding a neat two-storied brick building. It is the Vladimir Orphanage, a charitable institution for the children of poor prisoners, established by the voluntary contributions of the inhabitants of Tomsk. Two hundred boys and

girls, of ages ranging from five to fifteen, are here educated, fed, and clothed. The girls are taught needlework, dressmaking, and embroidery; the boys, tailoring, cobbling, and carpentering. Four hours a day are devoted to reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, etc. The matron, a motherly, white-haired old dame, showed me round the workrooms and dormitories, both airy and beautifully clean, the latter with polished *parquet* floors you might have seen your face in. Many of the girls go out to service, or even as nursery governesses; for they leave the Orphanage, as a rule, far better informed than even the elder members of the families into which they enter.

So ends my inspection of the Tomsk prisons. I have striven to describe them faithfully, and only fear that my narrative will prove too prosaic and matter-of-fact to excite much interest in the minds of those (and they are unfortunately many) who have hitherto associated Siberian exile with nothing but persecution, cruelty, and brutal licentiousness. As I have already stated, how-

ever, in the preface of this work, my object throughout has been to lay bare plain, unvarnished facts. What I saw, I have endeavoured to faithfully portray, and can only trust that my efforts have not proved entirely unsuccessful.

CHAPTER X.

TOMSK.

A BALL in Siberia!

I am not joking, reader, although to English minds the bare idea of such a thing may seem unbecoming and incongruous in a land of exile. The fact remains that I attended the gathering in question, and, though the entertainment, as regards the guests, savoured somewhat of Bret Harte's dance at "Poverty Flat"—

> "Harrison's barn and its muster
> Of flags festooned over the wall," etc.—

was vastly amused thereby. Although the "man that shot Sandy MacGee" was not present in the flesh, I made the acquaintance of his Siberian prototype during the evening in the person of an inebriated tchinovnik, who, while explaining

to me the system of a new patent in revolvers just out from Petersburg, nearly shot me through the leg. This was by no means the only stirring incident towards daylight. And I may here remark, in parenthesis, that the company, which assembled at 9 p.m., did not separate till the same hour on the following morning. My host was a gold-merchant, a man of considerable wealth, who, just returned from his yearly season at the goldfields of the Altaï district, in South Siberia,* was celebrating the event in the way most agreeable to his wife and daughters.

My presence at the ball in question came about thus :—One evening, while partaking of a solitary meal, enlivened by the dismal groans and wheezings of the inevitable barrel-organ, Mr. D——, a Tomsk merchant, approached and addressed me in French : "Pardon, monsieur, but has that old rascal S——" (the innkeeper) "put you in room No. 12?"

* Siberia is said to yield five millions sterling of pure gold yearly, and this with the most primitive machinery and appliances.

I bowed assent.

"I thought as much. Perhaps you don't happen to know that it has only lately been occupied by a man suffering from small-pox. Considering that there are three or four other rooms vacant, it's really too disgraceful."

I quite agreed, and summoned S——, a Polish Jew of filthy exterior and villanous countenance, with a view to at once changing my apartment, which, perhaps luckily, I had not yet entered. My somewhat natural indignation and threat of report to the police did not disconcert this Boniface in the least.

"Yes, it is true," he murmured with unruffled exterior; "the man had the small-pox, but it was a very mild attack." His answer reminded one of the Irish peasant girl, who, on being remonstrated with for deviation from the path of virtue, pleaded that the result of her indiscretions "was a very little one"!

"My object in coming here was to invite you to my ball," said my new acquaintance, after a hearty laugh at the cool impudence of the old

Israelite. "Finish your coffee and come with me. It is nine o'clock; they will have commenced."

I remarked that my dress, which consisted of tweeds and thick-soled field boots, was scarcely suitable for the occasion.

"Oh, never mind that. You will see many people still more curiously dressed."

He was right; I did.

A short drive through the dark, unpaved streets, dimly lit with oil lamps, and we pulled up with a jerk at the door of Mr. D——'s house, a long, one-storied wooden edifice, in a small garden. Through the open windows of the ballroom, blazing with light, couples were visible slowly gyrating to the strains of the "My Queen Valse," rendered by an orchestra composed of a fiddle, a flute, and a cracked trombone. (Imagine the combination!)

Ascending a flight of stone steps, we enter the vestibule, a light, cheerful-looking hall hung with bearskins, guns, French prints, a few cheap oleographs. "This is our drawing-room," says

D——, ushering me into a bare, uncomfortable room on the right. The walls are whitewashed, the large square windows draped with stiffly starched lace curtains. On a strip of Bokhára-ran carpet placed mathematically in the centre of the room, is an inlaid table of white marble and mosaic; ranged with the same precision round the walls, about a dozen cane-bottomed satin-wood chairs, which I am proudly informed have been imported from America and have cost a great deal of money. In a far corner of the room is an Erard grand piano, which I inwardly and devotedly hope may be substituted for the band before the end of the evening.

The ballroom, which on ordinary occasions was used as a dining-room, was really pretty and well arranged, two sides of it being lined with narrow beds of fragrant and beautiful wild and hot-house flowers, ferns, and moss; while at the further end of the room two large palms screened a small *buffet.* The love of flowers seems inherent in every Siberian, man or woman. Their outdoor gardens are such miserable

affairs, that nearly every wealthy establishment has a winter garden, or its living-rooms crammed with magnolias, camellias, palms, and orchids, brought, sometimes at fabulous expense, from Europe. The polished *parquet* of the ball-room at D——'s was newly laid, and as smooth as glass, but, as many of the dancers wore hob-nailed boots, did not seem likely to remain so.

Madame D——, a middle-aged but pleasant-looking woman, received me with the shy, *gauche* manner peculiar to the Siberian lady. Her daughters, Maria and Hélène, were slim-waisted and well dressed, and had received a Parisian education, although their mother had never even seen the western slope of the Ourals. Strange to say, this is not uncommon in Siberia.

"I am sure you dance *trois-temps*, Mr. de Windt," said Hélène, the elder, a pretty dark-eyed girl of about eighteen, in excellent English.

"Alas! not in these boots, mademoiselle," I answered, at which reply madame laughed immoderately. This was the only occasion, the whole evening, upon which I saw the poor lady

smile. Her anxiety may, indeed, have been caused by the rowdy behaviour of some young men who had taken up a position by the *buffet*, and who never left it till midnight, when supper was announced.

There must have been sixty or seventy guests. The majority of the women were plain and ill-mannered, in balloon-like muslin skirts of light loud colours, and wrinkled white cotton gloves, while their hair was dressed in the fashion of twenty years ago. Half a dozen, at the most, were pretty, and passably dressed—those who, like the demoiselles D——, had learnt how to walk and put their clothes on in France. The men, many of them, wore evening dress. Seldom, however, was the latter costume quite carried out. Light green or blue neckties, brown or shepherd's-plaid trousers, high-buttoned woollen waistcoats (in one case a light yellow alpaca dust-coat), invariably spoilt the effect. The son of the house was attired in a pair of jack-boots, white canvas trousers, a grey flannel shirt, and evening dress coat. He, however, retired at an early

stage of the proceedings, for reasons which the laws of hospitality preclude my mentioning. The remainder of the party was composed of young officers from the garrison, tchinovniks in uniform, and a few political exiles in plain morning dress.

G. V——, one of the latter, had a strange history, which he related to me in strict confidence towards the small hours. As I subsequently found that he had long since retailed it to half the inhabitants of Tomsk, and the notes of the case were afterwards sent me by a friend in St. Petersburg, I think I may venture to publish it for the reader's benefit.

G. V——, a tall, well-built man, with iron-grey hair and moustaches, was originally banished to Siberia for life, for a serious political offence in 1875, in company with an accomplice. Having served three years in the silver mines of Nertchinsk, G. V—— was liberated and permitted to live, as is usual, in comparative freedom. His companion, however, was of a violent and insubordinate character, and remained a hard-

labour convict. He was a surly, vindictive fellow, and, ever since G. V——'s liberation, had conceived a violent hatred for his former fellow-prisoner. A few months later, G. V—— managed, by means of a false passport, to escape to Tomsk. Here, under the very nose of the police, he took up his residence, and was even employed in one of the Government offices. Being a hard-working, capable man, he rose rapidly, and was eventually appointed clerk in the prison transport department, not a soul for a moment suspecting that the clever and promising young tchinovnik was in reality nothing more nor less than an escaped State prisoner.

This state of things might have gone on for ever, had not ill-luck ordained otherwise. One morning, about four or five years after G. V——'s arrival in Tomsk, a brodyag was captured in the outskirts of the town, and brought into the police office for examination. It was his companion from Nertchinsk. "Hallo!" cried the latter, as soon as he caught sight of his questioner. "Who gave *you* the right to wear gold shoulder-straps?"

Further disguise was useless. The next day, V. G—— was on his way back to Nertchinsk, not however to the mines (to the bitter disappointment of the brodyag), but, in recognition of his services, merely as an exile of the "free command." Three years later, he was permitted to return to Tomsk under police surveillance. His comrade died in prison the same year.*

* While on the subject of political exiles in Tomsk, the following anecdote deserves mention. The facts are supplied me by Mr. Davisson, and, I need not add, occurred some time after my last visit. A young student of St. Petersburg, son of an officer of high rank in the Russian army, was, a few months ago, banished to Tomsk for political reasons. As absence from Europe seriously interfered with his prospects in the medical profession, he resolved to escape, or rather regain his liberty, by a novel and somewhat ingenious device. The Czarewitch, on his homeward journey to Europe, was about to pass through Tomsk. The exile, therefore, purchased, a couple of days beforehand, a large china jar, which he filled with dirty water and salt. This he placed, in a conspicuous position, under a bridge over which the Imperial party was to pass. The object of the perpetrator of the hoax was to discover the supposed dynamite, inform the police, and thereby obtain a free pardon. Unfortunately, however, the jar was discovered by the Tomsk police, and no less than seven persons were at once arrested, not including, however, the real author of the mischief. The latter, alarmed at the commotion he had raised, at once confessed; and, the supposed explosive having been analyzed, the innocent persons, who had fortunately been only

Supper was served soon after midnight in an apartment adjoining the ball-room, a substantial sit-down meal, with courses, champagne, coffee, and liqueurs, which lasted at least two hours before dancing was resumed. Towards 3 a.m. the heat and noise became intolerable. Suddenly the band was deprived of the services of the trombone, who was gently but firmly conducted to a drojki by the flute, and sent home. An inebriated student then essayed to replace him at the piano. This was too much. Taking advantage of the laughter and confusion excited by the collapse of the brass instrument, I made my escape, and walked back, with a splitting headache, through the cool, silent streets to the inn.

It was late when I awoke the following morning, my rest having been considerably broken by the night watchmen who patrolled the streets till dawn, clashing together two pieces of metal, presumably to warn thieves and malefactors of their

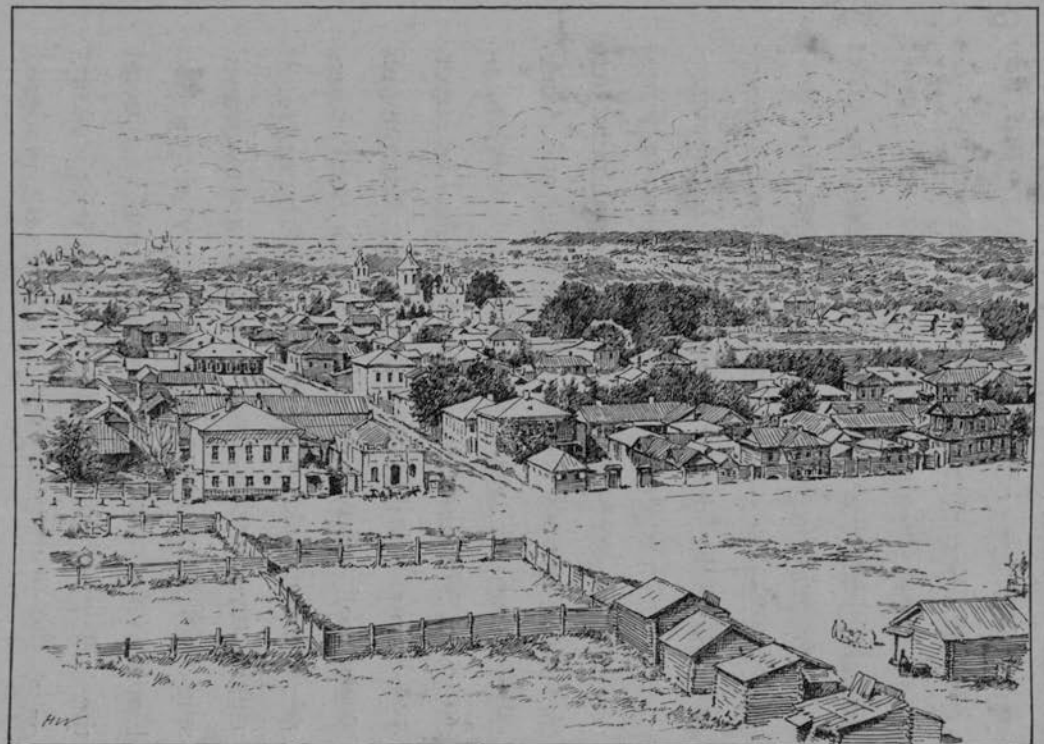
a few hours in custody, were at once liberated. The real culprit escaped with a fine of twenty-five roubles.

approach. This practice, universal throughout Siberia, is said to be of Chinese origin. On rising, a cold tub was naturally my first thought. But I soon discovered that this luxury was about as unobtainable as iced champagne at Timbuctoo. My room, a long, funnel-shaped apartment, which measured about twenty-two feet by twelve feet, was carpetless, and, for sole furniture, contained a greasy red velvet divan—innocent of pillows, sheets, or blankets — a hard, straight-backed wooden chair, an ikon in the corner, and, over the stove, a cheap, coloured print of his Majesty the Czar. This sumptuous apartment looked into the principal street. My "washstand," the landlord informed me, was outside, in the corridor, *pro bono publico*—a small tin bucket, holding about a pint, nailed against the grimy wall, from which trickled, through a tap, a tiny jet of anything but pure water. Next it hung a ragged and dirty towel. Such were the bathing appliances of the principal hotel in Tomsk. One would have been better off, in this respect at least, at the peresïlni.

Tomsk (which has a population of over forty thousand) is situated in the province of that name, which contains nearly a million inhabitants, and is, next to that of Tobolsk, the most populous in Russian Asia. Up to the year 1824 Tomsk was almost a village. It is only since then that the discovery of gold in the neighbourhood and establishment of river steam communication with Tiumen and Europe have made her what she is—the second city, in point of size and importance, in Siberia. The town is oblong in shape, and is built in two terraces. The higher of these contains some fine buildings, the houses of Government officials and rich merchants (Mr. D——'s amongst them). Picturesquely situated on a steep, rugged cliff, the upper town, when seen at a distance from the plain below, has an imposing appearance, however, quickly dispelled on closer acquaintance. Stone and marble become brick and whitewash; spacious gardens mere patches of dusty, trampled sward, weedy pathways, and stunted evergreens; while flowers are conspicuous by their absence. Wooden

buildings are rigidly excluded from this aristocratic quarter, which gives it a more tidy and uniform look than the lower, or business portion of the town. Here, brick and timber are jumbled together with no regard to order or appearance, a tumble-down wooden shanty being often seen (even in the main streets) leaning against a stately three-storied building.

A wide thoroughfare nearly a mile long runs across the lower part of the town. Here are the Government offices, warehouses, and workshops, with a goodly sprinkling of traktirs, or drinking bars for the lower orders. The street, which is often blocked for hours in the summer season by tea caravans (formed, in some cases, of a hundred to a hundred and fifty carts), is unpaved. In dry weather dense clouds assail the eyes, mouth, and nostrils, and on a still day hang over the city, covering it as with a funeral pall, while very little rain suffices to convert even the principal street into a swamp, rendered impassable by large pools of water, two or three inches deep, which stretch, at intervals, from side



TOMSK. THE LOWER TOWN.

to side of the roadway. Even the so-called pavements are often submerged. These are of wood, but rotten and neglected. In many places whole planks are missing, where the poorer inhabitants have helped themselves and carried away repairing materials for their log huts. There are shops, but no shop-windows, to enliven the dreary streets. An enterprising tradesman near my inn had fixed up a large plate-glass window, but the younger inhabitants had evidently resented this fresh innovation and sent a stone through it. The *coup d'œil*, especially on dull days, is singularly melancholy and depressing. Imagine a dreary perspective of black road, rutty and uneven, with, on either side, mean-looking whitewashed houses and architecture, tumble-down wooden huts in various stages of decay, and a few rickety oil street-lamps. Not a trace of vegetation or colour, save the dull red of some newly erected brick dwelling, or the dingy green strips of grass laid bare, here and there, by the broken footway. With these surroundings conceive a searching and

ubiquitous odour (peculiar to Siberian towns and villages) of sheep-skins, wood-smoke, turpentine, farmyards, and sewage, and the *grande rue* of Tomsk is before you. The picture is dismal, but not overdrawn.

I called the day after the ball on my hostess of the previous evening, but she and the rest of the family were from home. Mdlle. Hélène, however, was in, and would receive me. I was accordingly shown into that young lady's boudoir, a perfumed little nest, with rose-tinted walls, Turkish embroideries, Persian rugs, palms, low luxurious couches, and a piano. The pretty child, for she was little more, was lying lazily at full length on a sofa, smoking a papiroska. A table at her elbow was littered with flowers, photographs, and yellow-backed French novels, in one of which, as I entered the room, she was deeply immersed. It was Zola's "Bête Humaine." Hélène D——'s slim, graceful form was draped in soft white material that, bare at the arms and throat, set off to perfection the exquisite moulding of her girlish figure and

limbs. The fatigue and excitement of the ball had only accentuated the beauty of the soft dark eyes and drooping lashes. A knot of yellow ribbon, almost lost in dark curly tresses, was the only spot of colour about this lovely picture; for it *was* a lovely picture, always excepting "La Bête Humaine"!

"I saw you steal away last night," began mademoiselle, with a mischievous smile, "although you thought you were unobserved. Well, I forgive you. Are they not savages, these Siberians? If you only knew how I long sometimes for my beautiful Paris!"

But vain regrets for beautiful Paris did not prevent my pretty hostess from inviting me, in the very next breath, to a water-party on the morrow. I declined the honour with thanks, gathering from her description that this aquatic entertainment would be merely a daylight edition of the last, with the off-chance of a drunken captain and shipwreck.

These river picnics are very popular in Siberia. A large steamer is chartered by a number of the

townspeople—some two hundred odd, as a rule. There is no distinction as to class. The richest merchant in Tomsk hobnobs with the poorest tradesman, who has scraped up enough money to join the expedition. Higher prices, however, are charged for private cabins, and here the millionaires * entertain their friends, while their less wealthy neighbours make merry on deck in the open air. The latter are, perhaps, not so much to be pitied, as the cabins, constructed to hold two, frequently accommodate ten, and the atmosphere, on a hot day, would asphyxiate a salamander. Heat begets thirst, and drink is plentiful. In the saloons are large bars, where champagne, claret, beer, and liqueurs flow freely and without intermission throughout the day; while on deck the supply of kvas and vodka is inexhaustible. A brass band accompanies the vessel, which leaves about midday, steams half-speed down stream for a given number of hours,

* I use the term "millionaire" advisedly, and in the higher sense. There are many such amongst the gold-merchants of Siberia.

and then—steams back again. In addition to unlimited zakouski, such as salted, raw, or pickled fish, caviare, cheese, etc., a substantial meal is served at four o'clock in the saloon, which lasts till about 7 p.m. Dancing and other amusements then fill in the time till midnight, when (all being well) home is reached.

I obtained, over a cup of delicious caravan tea, a good deal of information from Mdlle. D——, concerning social life in Tomsk. "Winter for pleasure, summer for work," is the Siberian gold-worker's motto, for in the former season, which commences the first week in October, Tomsk becomes a whirlpool of activity and dissipation, and balls, theatricals, masquerades, suppers, horse-racing, sleighing parties, and snow hills (or tobogganning) keep the place alive till the return of spring. There are two good theatres—one for operas of a light kind, such as "La Mascotte," "Cloches de Corneille," etc.; the other for comedy and drama. Considering that the artists are all engaged from European Russia, the prices are not ruinous,

ranging from fifty kopeks * to eight roubles. But gaiety reaches its zenith at Christmas, for this is the masquerade season, when, to quote my fair friend's words, "we sometimes don't go to bed for two or three days together." Siberians are fond of scandal, and at this season there seems to be plenty of food for it.

The majority of Siberian women have no occupation, no object in life, and lead, at the same time, an aimless, unwholesome existence. Music, needlework, embroidery, and similar feminine occupations are unknown to the Siberian lady. You will find her, nine times out of ten, either smoking, novel-reading, or fortune-telling by means of cards; for she is rather superstitiously inclined. During my visit to Mdlle. Hélène, a thunderstorm burst over Tomsk, and at the first clap of thunder my hostess became suddenly silent and preoccupied. Attributing this to alarm, I essayed to reassure her. "Oh, I am not frightened," she said, after a long pause. "I was merely trying to recall the

* Half a rouble.

names and features of six bald-headed acquaintances. It averts the lightning.* Please excuse me for the interruption," she added, smiling, and resuming our broken conversation.

Circumstances and altered conditions of life render the Siberian peasant woman a striking contrast to her wealthier sister. The former is, as a rule, clean, thrifty, and religious. Among this class there is little or no immorality, for the women not only conduct household affairs, but help to plough, sow, and reap in the fields, and work like beasts of burden from sunrise to sunset. There are thus few "idle hands" for the devil to provide work for. Good looks are rare among the female peasantry. Pretty Nadia of Oshalka was indeed an exception. Although generally morally and intellectually superior to her husband, the married woman among the lower orders in Siberia is treated more as a slave than a companion, and her opinion goes for little or nothing in household and other affairs.

The Siberian (so-called) gentleman leads a

* This superstition is common in European Russia.

strange existence. I do not allude to officers and tchinovniks, whose duties are pretty much the same all the year round, but to the gold-merchant; for, if we exclude the clergy, educational staff, exiles, and small tradesmen, the above three classes constitute society in the larger Siberian towns. For five months of the year, then, the gold-merchant lives a healthy, open-air life. Debarred by distance from drink and debauchery, he spends his days amid the bustle and excitement of the gold fields, his nights quietly and at rest under canvas, or, still more frequently, the starry vault of heaven. It is probably owing to this circumstance that any of these men survive middle age. No constitution could stand, for longer, an unbroken round of Siberian dissipation.

The gold-merchant is an early bird under any circumstances, and invariably rises between 7 and 8 a.m., although he may have had but a couple of hours' rest. I should mention, however, that he gets through a good deal of sleep at odd times during the day. Nearly every

meal is succeeded by a nap. Dressing operations do not take long, for, when he retires, our friend only divests himself of his coat and boots. The samovar* is, at 8 a.m., set on the dining-room table, with eggs, black and white bread, sardines, jam, and cakes, etc. Breakfast is eaten, washed down by five or six glasses of tea stirred up with sugar, cream, and sometimes jam. Lemons are seldom procurable, and cost two to three roubles each, although in European Russia they may be bought for as many kopeks. At one o'clock, dinner is served, consisting, on ordinary occasions, of soup, containing meat, two or three different kinds of fish, poultry, or game, and sweets. At 5 p.m., another small meal like that of the morning is taken, with the addition, this time, of wine and liqueurs. A meat supper follows at 9 p.m. A favourite dish at this meal in winter is stroganina, which consists of very thin slices of raw frozen fish, eaten with

* A large brass urn, lined with tin and filled with hot water, having a tube in the centre containing red-hot cinders.

vinegar, pepper, and salt. It has the advantage (in Siberia) of being a great thirst-producer.

There is plenty of sport to be had in the immediate neighbourhood of Tomsk, and bear, wolf, hares, capercailzie, partridge, and wild duck



A COUNTRY CART, TOMSK.

abound. But sportsmen are few. A Siberian seldom takes exercise of any kind unless absolutely necessary, and never dreams of walking, even a hundred yards, if he can possibly help it. Cabs are plentiful in Tomsk, and fares cheap

enough—ten kopeks a "course," and thirty kopeks the hour. In summer the drojkis are dirty, springless, uncomfortable vehicles; but in winter the public sleighs are, though roughly constructed, comfortable enough.

Card-playing is the Siberian's chief recreation during the winter months, and enormous sums are nightly won and lost in the club at Tomsk.* The favourite games are "Vint" and "Shtoss." The former is, as I have already said, closely allied to our English whist; but the latter requires no science, and is a pure gamble. A card is named, and an ordinary pack dealt—to the right for the players, to the left for the bank. The side upon which it turns up wins, the bank having certain advantages, as at most games of chance. So engrossing is this game that to lose £1000 sterling in a single night is a common occurrence, and a season at Tomsk rarely passes without at least two suicides, resulting from high plays and heavy losses. Large sums are also ventured betting on

* The number of packs of cards annually sent into Siberia has been estimated at several hundred tons.

horse-racing, a sport which, according to English ideas, must be rather quaint, the horses running in deep snow. At Yeniseisk, a large town not far from Krasnoyarsk, the races take place actually on the frozen river, over a course cleared on the ice. Some of the racehorses belonging to the wealthier merchants are imported from Europe.

One night I was awakened by a disturbance in the street. A blaze of red light was streaming through my curtainless windows, the reflection of a fire which had broken out among the wooden dwellings of the lower town. Huddling on my clothes, I crept down the dark stairway, and unlatching the street door, ran to the scene of the disaster, guided by a lurid glare against the dark sky. Half a dozen cottages had been burnt to the ground, but when I arrived on the scene (barely a mile distant) the excitement was nearly over. Three fire-engines were playing on the smouldering embers of what would have been a serious conflagration had help not arrived so promptly. Protected by three fire-towers, on

which watchmen are posted night and day, Tomsk has little reason to fear the fate of Irkoutsk, which, ten years ago, was more than half destroyed by the flames. Two engines, fully equipped, and each harnessed to a troika, or team of three horses, are kept ready, summer and winter, to set out and render assistance at a moment's notice. I visited the fire station next day, and was surprised to find it conducted on very much the same system as those in London. Men, engine, and horses were as smart and clean as new pins, and there was a quiet, workmanlike look about the whole thing that reminded one not a little of our Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

In addition to telegrams from Europe, which are posted daily at the club, two newspapers are published in Tomsk, one twice, the other three times a week. The former is the organ of the Government, but the latter holds liberal views, and is more of the nature of our society papers, containing personal gossip, as well as general information on the topics of the day. There is

apparently no law of libel here, for the few numbers that I saw were chiefly devoted to violent attacks on private individuals.

Tomsk has no less than thirty-five churches, not including the cathedral, a handsome stone building erected a few years since. The Siberians are very religious, and Lent is not kept more strictly in Rome than in Asiatic Russia. The eve of this season is regarded as a kind of public holiday. Smart carriages and drojkis dash about the street all day, and drive from house to house, the callers partaking of hot pancakes and fresh caviare, wine, liqueurs, etc., the pancake taking the place of our hot cross-bun. Dinners and suppers follow, but by midnight the revellers have retired, and the feasting is over. The fast has commenced.

Name-days are in Siberia always the occasion of much rejoicing and eating and drinking. Prayer and meditation in a church begin the day at 7 a.m., and at about 11 a.m. there is a reception at the house, and friends arrive with gifts and congratulations. Meanwhile, as a matter

of course, zakouski, champagne, and liqueurs are discussed *ad libitum.* This continues till about 2 p.m., when (as the play bills say) there is an interval of two hours, presumably for rest, as the guests return to their respective homes. At 4 p.m., those specially invited reassemble, and dinner is served. It is an uncomfortable, disjointed kind of meal, eaten standing or walking about the room; but, though there are no seats, this Gargantuan meal sometimes lasts two hours. The following is the kind of *menu* provided:—

1. Pancakes, fried in grease with fresh caviare.
2. Fish soups (hot and iced).
3. Meat soup, with beef or veal.
4. Fish—sterlet, soudac, etc.
5. *Entrées,* rissoles, cutlets, etc.
6. The name-day *pâté,* a huge pie filled with fish of various kinds, eggs, rice, cabbage, etc.
7. Sucking pig and vegetables.
8. Chicken and game.
9. Ices and pastry.

10. Coffee; liqueurs—champagne, claret, hock, and "punch." *

For those (and, strange to say, there are always some) who may again feel hungry in the course of the evening, there are always zakouski at the side table.

It would be unfair, after so minutely enumerating their failings, to pass over the good qualities of the Siberians. That the latter are coarse, ill-bred, and aggressive, can scarcely be denied, but their antecedents must be taken into consideration; also the fact that many of these men, with millions in their pockets and the manners of navvies, have never known better; have never seen, perhaps never even heard of, the ways and customs of Western civilization. That they are not all bad is shown by their good works. At Tomsk, for instance, there are no less than

* Let me advise the reader not to partake of this beverage, although I give the ingredients :—

Three bottles of champagne, half a bottle of brandy, four glasses curaçoa, four glasses of vodka, two bottles of soda-water, four table-spoonfuls of sugar, sliced apple, and grated nutmeg. *Set on fire.*

twenty charitable institutions of various kinds, established and kept up entirely by voluntary contributions, and one seldom, if ever, sees a beggar in the streets, either here or at Irkoutsk. Nor are the prisons forgotten, large sums being given yearly by private individuals for the benefit of the poorer criminals and their families. The rich Siberian is, in many cases, too fond of dissipation, but we must acknowledge that charity covers a multitude of sins. Besides, a change is at hand, and better things may be hoped for from the next generation. Siberia is now much in the same state as our Australian colonies thirty years ago, though perhaps more advanced than were the latter at that period, with regard to education, which is making rapid strides throughout the country. Every town now has its college and many schools for both sexes, whilst Tomsk possesses a fine university (opened in 1888), with over a thousand students. For the establishment of this, a grant of one million roubles was allowed by the Government, and as much if not more was subscribed by the

gold-merchants. The university is an enormous building, and contains a splendid museum and valuable library, presented by a wealthy Russian nobleman, Count Strogánoff. It is beautifully furnished throughout, and many of the professors' apartments would excite the envy of our Oxford and Cambridge dons.

The steamer was advertised to leave for Tiumen at mid-day, but I arrived on the wharf at that hour to find the landing stage almost impassable, and piled up with bales upon bales of tea to the height of the vessel's foremast. There was no chance of getting away for at least six hours, said the captain, so I retraced my steps and strolled up to the Peresilni. The old gaoler, who was enjoying a siesta, was not best pleased at the interruption, but I dismissed him at the gate, and walked round the kameras alone. The latter were, like the courtyard, almost empty, for a gang of six hundred exiles (including my friend from the Paris hotel) had that morning left for Irkoutsk. The Jew "political" was still there, and waved me an oily greeting from behind the bars

of his open window; but the poor childless, crazy woman was gone. She had been removed to the Goubernski, said the gaoler, while her friends at Nijni-Novgorod were communicated with, and would probably be sent back to Europe before the winter.

We leave Tomsk towards evening. I turn my face westward with regret, for Siberia, though a land of melancholy associations, has, and ever will have, a strange and irresistible attraction for me. To-night, seen from the deck of the steamer, across the drab sun-scorched plain, the dingy lower town is almost invisible, and the place looks like some fair Moorish city rising out of the desert, its white walls and towers flushed with the warm tender tints of a glorious sunset, while to the west a fleecy mass of purple cloud hangs, still and motionless, against a background of gold and turquoise sky. Night creeps on almost imperceptibly, while waves of delicate colour, radiating from rose to the lightest shades of violet and grey, sweep across the heavens, and the river, a glistening

belt of silver, catches and reflects them with a rhythm as regular as flashes of a revolving light. Were the effect portrayed on canvas, men would call the artist mad.

A few moments more, and the glowing tints fade; the sky, lightened only on the western horizon, becomes of a uniform slate-grey colour, while the river dulls and deepens in the dusk. Presently a dense white mist arises from its surface and spreads slowly across the plain, gradually enveloping the base of the city till the dim yellowish lights of the upper town seem to shine from an island, while, just above them, a pure white star twinkles, like a tiny diamond, in the blue haze of coming night.

By nine o'clock we are under way. Twelve days later, I was in Tiumen.

CHAPTER XI.

TIUMEN—THE FORWARDING PRISON.

WERE I a cruel, vindictive despot, with the power of wreaking vengeance on my deadliest enemy, I would not confine myself to inflicting torture by such crude old-fashioned means as molten lead, the rack, or thumbscrew. My victim should undergo mental misery as well, in the shape of a month's residence at the Hôtel Sherbákoff, Tiumen, Siberia. If he survived that, I should give it up as a bad job, and forgive him.

The landlord, a stout, bald-headed man, had been a sailor, and had visited the port of Hull and picked up half a dozen words of English, but his invariable answer of "Very good, why not?" became somewhat monotonous after a time, especially as it generally had no connection whatever with the topic of conversation.

I arrived in Tiumen at daybreak, having posted all through the night in a rough telega from Yevlevoi, this time, luckily, without mishap. Aching in every limb, and half blinded with wind and dust, I alighted at the door of the Sherbákoff, and pulled for quite an hour at the rusty bell-chain without attracting the slightest attention. "You had better sleep in here," said my yemstchik, yawning, and curling himself up in the loose straw at the bottom of the telega; "it is past five o'clock, and the girls will be out at six for milking." But I did not see it in this light. The sharp morning air cut like a knife, and a roofless telega and bare boards are but a poor substitute for the soft sofa which, I fondly imagined, was close at hand. So my yemstchik snored away in peace, the poor jaded screws in the troika slept standing, while I continued, mechanically and at intervals of about thirty seconds, to pull the loud and discordant bell.

I commenced this performance in pitch darkness. When, at length, a ragged, shock-headed

boy answered the summons, it was broad daylight—the cold, cheerless dawn of a dull, sunless day, with its usual accompaniments of cock-crowing and awakening animal life, whilst wreaths of wood-smoke, rising from two or three adjacent houses in the still morning air, showed that, at last, the inmates were stirring.

My quarters at Tomsk were luxurious and palatial compared to the room, or rather den, about twenty feet long by eighteen feet broad, into which I was shown at Tiumen. From the ceiling, which had once been whitewashed, great pieces of plaster had fallen away, disclosing laths and rafters, and, in places, the room above; while long strips of dirty mildewed paper, dislodged by time and damp, hung mournfully from the grimy walls. The flooring, of rotten, insecure boards, was carpetless, and the room absolutely bare of all furniture save a small truckle bedstead, which, covered with an old and ragged mattress, stood in a corner of the room. Any idea of reclining on this was soon banished by discovering that the filthy bedding was occupied by legions of

white bugs, an animal peculiar to Siberia, which inflicts an irritating and poisonous bite. The place also swarmed with large grey rats, which, emboldened by numbers, seemed to resent intrusion, and ran about the floor all day (and over my body at night), regardless of all efforts to scare them away.

There was no food in the house, said the landlord, cheerfully, but he could send for some when the stores opened.

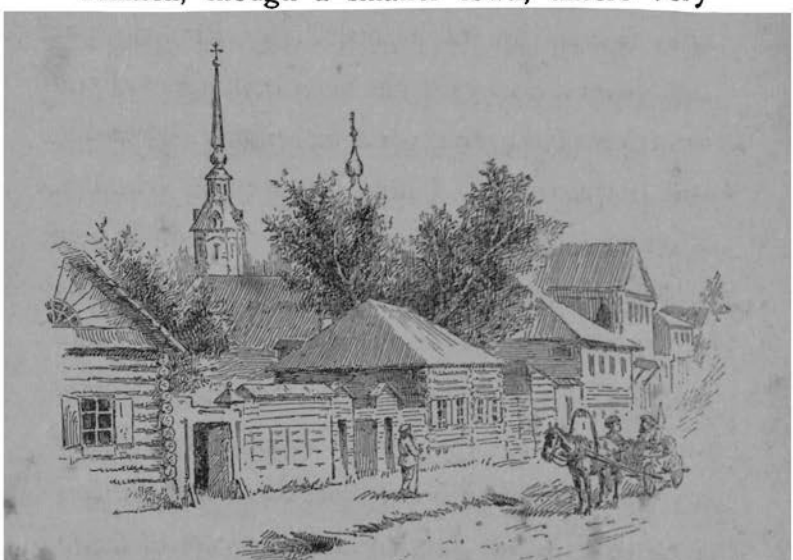
"Can I wash anywhere?" I asked despairingly.

"Very good, why not?" replied mine host, adding, in Russian, "Nice pond in the yard," and pointing to a shallow puddle of brown stagnant water, coated with slime and duckweed.

I may add that the Sherbákoff is (or was) the best hotel in the place, notwithstanding that Tiumen is practically the doorstep of Siberia, through which nearly all the trade of Asiatic Russia passes, and is therefore a town of considerable mercantile importance. As the reader may imagine, I was not anxious to prolong my stay here longer than was absolutely

necessary. Having, therefore, made myself as presentable as circumstances would permit, I set out, after a frugal meal of eggs and black bread (eaten on the floor), for the prison.

Tiumen, though a smaller town, differs very



A STREET IN TIUMEN.

little from Tomsk. Although the former is more picturesquely situated on the precipitous, winding banks of the river Toura, its streets have the same untidy look, its buildings (many of them wooden) the same dilapidated, polyglot appearance, as those of the capital of Western Siberia. Tiumen

contains about twenty thousand inhabitants, many of whom are employed in the leather trade and the manufacture of boots and gloves. It is estimated that over three hundred thousand pairs of the latter are turned out yearly. The town is also famous for its carpets, while within the past few years a dockyard has been built for the construction of the river steamers plying on the Obi and Irtysh rivers. Unlike Tomsk and Irkoutsk, Tiumen is a dull, stagnant place the whole year round—a sad contrast to the two gay capitals. There is no sport or amusement of any kind even in winter, though, during the summer months, a fifth-rate circus sometimes finds its way up here from Nijni-Novgorod, and pitches its camp for a few days on a lonely piece of waste ground set aside for the purpose just outside the city. But equestrian art is at a low ebb, and it never stays long.

It is a miserable day. A thin but persistent rain has been falling since morning, and a dense yellow fog obscures objects a few yards distant, as I make my way with some difficulty through

the narrow, tortuous streets to the outskirts of the town, where I presently discern a huge barrack-like building, surrounded by high walls, and the now familiar black-and-white sentry-boxes looming through the mist. To the right of the entrance is a kind of office or guard-house. Half a dozen soldiers are playing Vint with a dirty pack of cards by the feeble light, although it is barely three o'clock, of a guttering tallow candle. A hum of voices and the jingle of chains on the other side of the wall attracts my attention to a small wicket in the gate, against the bars of which a succession of faces is eagerly pressed, for, notwithstanding the rain, many of the convicts are in the yard. Having to be summoned from his house, some distance off, some time elapses before the governor, in full uniform, a clattering sabre at his side, makes his appearance. He is enveloped in a grey military cloak, trimmed with sable, and turned up over his ears till only the glowing tip of a papiroska is visible. The governor is a stout, unhealthy-looking individual, with sallow com-

plexion and carefully trimmed moustache and whiskers, and, having a singularly sharp, unpleasant manner and voice, is evidently cordially disliked by both guards and prisoners. He does not return my salute, so I apologize, in French, for disturbing him on such a day, remarking that my time in Tiumen is limited; but my words are met with stolid silence. I then try the same speech in Russian, but unsuccessfully, and therefore leave my taciturn friend to his own devices, and converse with the head gaoler, who, though a coarse-looking, illiterate man, is at any rate communicative and polite. A large staff of soldiers follows us round the prison, evidently by direction of the chief, whose conceited and self-satisfied bearing, as he swaggers through the kameras, raises a smile even from the most dejected-looking convicts. Here, unlike Tomsk, two of our party carried loaded rifles, and every soldier about the prison a revolver.

The Tiumen forwarding prison is a right-angled, whitewashed brick building, three stories high, and enclosed by a wall twenty feet high, at each

outside corner of which is posted, night and day, a sentry with loaded rifle. Surrounding the main building are three or four smaller ones of the same material, among them a chapel, which, with its bright green roof and golden crosses, relieves, to a certain extent, the melancholy impression produced by bare walls, massive portals, and iron bars. Seen from outside, the place presents an imposing appearance, and, with its clean-looking white walls and neat red zinc roofing, is a decided improvement on the low wooden huts and roughly erected stockades of Tomsk. But the latter prison is, as regards sanitary arrangements, far superior, although, even at Tiumen, I found that evils had been greatly exaggerated, and that the kameras were, with one exception, perfectly inhabitable, though considerably more crowded than they should have been. I should have preferred (on the principle of keeping the *bonne bouche* for the last) to commence with this prison, and finish with that of Tomsk. This, however, would have defeated my own object, which was to arrive quite unexpectedly at the latter place.

Since my return to England, it has been repeatedly urged that the prisons of Siberia were prepared for me. If so, why was not Tiumen prison furbished up for my reception; and why have I nothing but good to say of the Tomsk Peresilni, which I visited at twelve hours' notice, and but little that is favourable of Tiumen, where the authorities had quite three weeks to put things in order, had they been so minded?

This prison was originally built to hold six hundred prisoners, but has been considerably added to, in the shape of one-storied brick buildings and wooden barracks. It now accommodates eight hundred without overcrowding; but the day of my visit the number board at the gateway showed that no less than 1367 prisoners, of all sexes and ages, were confined within its walls. The prison for women is of wood, and separated from that of the men by a public thoroughfare. On the same side of the road as the former is a large wooden shed for voluntary exiles and their children.

Unlike the spacious, breezy courtyard at Tomsk, the enclosure of the Tiumen Peresilni is cramped and encumbered with sheds and out-houses. The unpaved, undrained earth had been trodden into a morass by the prisoners, and pools of muddy water lay about the ground. Notwithstanding the weather, groups of grey-clad convicts were scattered about, some sheltering under the overhanging eaves of the main building, others wading about in the mire, regardless of the soaking rain. Each kamera was dimly lit by a small kerosene lamp, which just sufficed to make darkness visible, while the closed windows were thick with dust and dirt. The first room I entered, in one of the smaller buildings, was literally packed with prisoners, as close as sardines in a box. Although the day was chilly, and the stove unlit, the door was no sooner opened than I felt a heat on my face, as that of a hot blast from a furnace. Inside the kamera, however, though the heat was overpowering, the stench was, to a certain extent, lessened by tobacco smoke. But damp sweated from the walls and



A CRIMINAL KAMERA, TIUMEN FORWARDING PRISON.

rafters, and a warm, sticky yellow vapour seemed to rise from between the muddy planks, imparting a sour, sickly taste to the very breath one drew, arising from the smell emanating from crowded humanity. The place repelled and disgusted me, and, overcome with sudden nausea, I was forced for a few moments to seek the fresh air of the yard.

"Smirno!" cried the head gaoler, when I re-entered, and the dense mass of convicts, with a clashing of chains and scraping of feet, struggled to attention, doffed their grey caps, and gave a simultaneous yell of "Good day," that might have been heard a mile off. I noticed that many more of the prisoners wore leg irons here than at Tomsk, the reason being that, in the case of less serious offenders, fetters are struck off only after leaving Tiumen. The arrangement of this kamera was precisely the same as that of those at Tomsk and Moscow. Double sleeping platforms ran down the centre and round three sides of the ward, affording room for, perhaps, two-thirds of the occupants; certainly

not more. Most of the exiles looked weak and pale (which was scarcely to be wondered at in such an atmosphere), and wore a more downcast, dejected look than those at Tomsk. One of the prison surgeons, Dr. V——, a middle-aged, intelligent man, who spoke French fluently, now joined us, and to him I remarked on the different appearance presented by the inmates of the two prisons.

"No wonder," was the reply; "Tiumen is the prison most dreaded throughout the whole of Siberia. A convict leaves here, even for the mines, with a light heart."

I inquired why it bore such a bad reputation.

"Cannot you see?" answered the doctor—"overcrowding. The treatment is the same, the food as good, the freedom as great as in other prisons; but the size of the place is totally inadequate to the number of prisoners. Thank God," he added, "things will be remedied next year, and the work that has been done at Tomsk will be carried out here."

"But why, in Heaven's name, do you not run

up temporary buildings for these poor wretches in the mean time?" I asked.

"So we should," answered the doctor, "were they needed; but what you have just seen does not happen once in six months, and is entirely due to the interrupted communication between Tiumen and Tomsk. I do not deny that the place is overcrowded," he added, "but not to the extent of the kamera we were in just now, which is occupied exclusively by a gang of exiles bound for the mines, who came in this morning by train. They and four hundred more will leave to-morrow for Tomsk,* and stringent orders have been given that, until the river is open, convicts are to be detained at Perm, where, as you are probably aware, there is a very large prison."

An inspection of the remaining kameras proved that the doctor's statement was correct. The wards were crowded, certainly, but the atmosphere, though close, was fairly pure, and there

* I witnessed the departure of this gang at 8 a.m. the following morning.

was room for all on the sleeping platforms. I noticed that, in the main building, the door of every kamera was wide open, and there was free access to the yard, while there was a constant supply of pure air from large open windows at either end of each corridor.* The larger kameras, of which there were four, measured about forty-five feet long by twenty-five feet broad, and contained one hundred and eighty to two hundred men. Each had two large windows which the convicts might open, but I noticed that, with one exception, they were shut. As the large stoves at the corner of each room were in full blast, it was, to my mind, too warm to be pleasant, but, as I have already remarked, the lower-class Russian has peculiar ideas on the subject of ventilation and artificial heat, and can do with a minimum amount of oxygen. I have not the slightest doubt that, even in the first kamera I visited, there were many who, had it not been for the

* The sanitary arrangements of the main building are at each end of every corridor, six in all, and are cleanly, well ventilated, and free from smell.

discomfort and restraint caused by overcrowding, would have slept peacefully and contentedly, although the temperature must have been considerably over 90° Fahr., and the air, to English lungs, foul and oppressive.

As we entered most of the kameras, the majority of the prisoners, with long grey overcoats thrown over their linen suits, were listlessly lounging about, some lying on the platforms asleep or smoking, others chatting in groups. At the word "Smirno!" all sprang to their feet with alacrity, and uncovered, at the same time shouting "Good day." The occupants of the different kameras, in giving this greeting, seemed to vie with each other who should yell the loudest.

There was no work of any kind going on in the prison. Some of the convicts were cobbling and sewing, but merely for repairing purposes. A young girlish-looking lad in chains had ingeniously fashioned a pretty cross out of twigs and bits of stick, picked up by the roadside. The poor boy's face flushed with pleasure when the doctor praised his work, and I was permitted

to give him a rouble, which he received with a grateful smile, and instantly passed on to the starosta. The latter are a recognized institution in Siberian prison life. A starosta, or elder, is elected by his fellow-prisoners, and afterwards becomes practically an unpaid official, insomuch as Government invests him with a certain amount of authority, and holds him responsible should any riot or outbreak occur. In addition to fulfilling the duties of banker and purveyor to his gang, he is spokesman in all cases of discussion or complaint. The prisoners, also, have their own code of laws. Should any of their number misconduct himself, a secret tribunal is formed, of which the starosta is appointed president, and the culprit is sometimes rather severely dealt with.*

The upper story of the main building contained only cells for political prisoners (twelve in all), about the same size as those in the Tomsk Peresilni, clean and airy. I entered all, but only four were occupied; three by political prisoners.

* This custom is now practically abolished.

From the windows I could see well over the prison walls, and on a clear day there was, I was told, an uninterrupted view of Tiumen and the picturesque Irtysh Valley. Two of the exiles, both students of Moscow University, had provided themselves with cigarettes and books, while in one cell I noticed a bottle of eau de Cologne, which the occupant had (he himself owned) procured from the town that morning. A tin washing-basin and water-can and toilet requisites stood at the foot of the bed, on which was a straw-stuffed paillasse, linen pillow, and blanket. A large brick stove stood in a corner. The floor was clean, though uncarpeted, but the whitewashed walls and ceiling were dirty, and covered with drawings and inscriptions in pencil. In one corner was a rudely drawn sketch of three racehorses at full gallop, and underneath it the words, in French, "Grand Prix de Paris, Minting, 1;" in another a cleverly drawn head of a woman, with the signature in Russian characters, "Ivan;" while the plaster was closely covered with writings in Russian, French, and

German, some in prose, others in poetry. De Musset's lines—

> "J'ai perdu la force et la vie
> Et mon bonheur et ma gaité,"

were scrawled over the bed in large letters, while near them, in a neat feminine hand, a more cheerfully disposed exile had written, under his Christian name—

> "Qui sacrifia tout pour son pays,
> Et se dévoua corps et âme à la patrie,
> Peut vivre heureux, même en Sibérie." *

On a small deal table by the window, under a shaded lamp, was a woman's photograph in a gilt frame, an inkstand, pen, blotting-paper, and unfinished letter. I mention these apparently trivial details to show that money will procure even a Siberian political exile the necessaries, if not the luxuries of life, though I should add that this prisoner had, for good conduct, been granted permission to write to his friends. Writing materials are, as a rule, prohibited in the case of

* These lines occur in "Mes Prisons en Russie," by J. Gordon. Leipsic: Herold and Lindner, 1861.

political offenders during the first part of their sentence.

The fourth cell was occupied by a criminal in prison dress. "Ten years ago that man would have been torn in pieces," said the doctor. "He is an informer, and warned the authorities in time to prevent the escape of one of his mates from Perm."

"But why is he here?"

"It is more prudent to keep him apart from the rest of the prisoners. In two or three months, when this affair has blown over, we shall send him to Tobolsk or Tomsk to complete his sentence. His companions, who leave to-morrow, are all bound for the mines. In former times this man would have stood a poor chance. No provision was then made for the protection of informers; for they have occasionally been found dead in the *étapes*, strangled or with their throats cut. Nous avons changé tout cela."

"What object was there in killing them?" I asked, surveying with some curiosity the poor wretch before us, who was anxiously biting his

nails and casting quick anxious glances towards the open doorway.

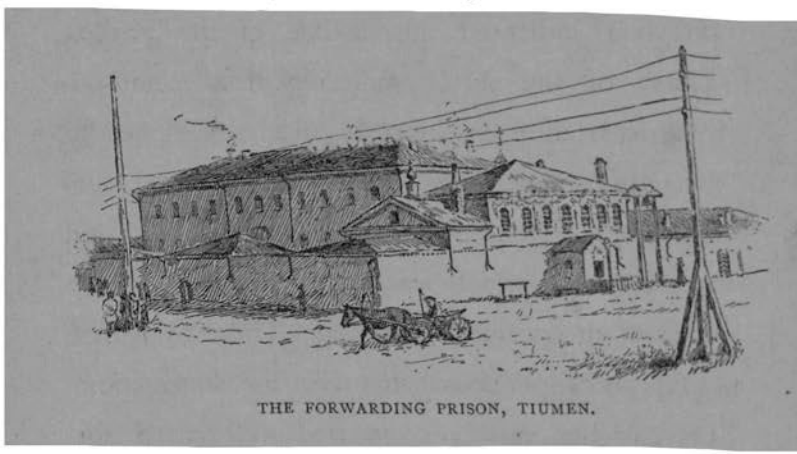
"Revenge. In olden days the traitor was tried by jury, the starosta pronounced judgment, and the sentence, after drawing lots, was carried out by one of the convicts. Our prison reforms, however, have now done away with these abominable practices, though it is always well to be careful and guard against accidents," he added, smiling significantly.

The governor, who throughout the proceedings had maintained a dignified silence, now took his leave, for which I was not sorry. "The doctor will show you the remainder of the kameras," he said, "and the hospital. I have other and more important business to attend to." And, with a curt nod and martial sweep of the grey cloak over his shoulders, the little man swaggered away down the yard, followed by his staff of obsequious and trembling officials, and I saw him no more.

"He never does care much about visiting the hospitals," muttered the doctor under his

breath, as soon as his chief was out of hearing. "You had better light a cigarette," he added, leading the way up the steep stairway of a low building immediately facing the entrance gate. "We have several cases of typhus and small-pox."

The infirmary contained eight or nine wards,



THE FORWARDING PRISON, TIUMEN.

with beds for about a hundred and fifty patients, three rooms being set apart for women. The wards for infectious diseases were separate from the rest, and were arranged to accommodate thirty patients. In the latter wards seventeen of the beds were occupied chiefly by cases of typhus and typhoid fever. I was not sorry, before many

minutes elapsed, that I had taken the doctor's advice and lit a papiroska.

The plank floors showed traces of having been lately washed and scraped, but the bedding was ragged and dirty, and I looked in vain for ventilating appliances. As at Tomsk, a small black label with white letters at the head of the bed indicated the disease of the patient. Those of the latter suffering from small-pox were isolated from the rest; and here, especially, the atmosphere was close and polluted, and impregnated with the smell of disease and dirty linen, to which was added the faint, sickly odour of drugs and chemicals. There appeared to be no appliances whatever for fumigation. The patients, however, seemed well cared for in other ways, and the hospital soup and white bread (which I tasted) excellent. In the general ward the principal diseases seemed to be phthisis and rheumatism. The doctor told me, however, that the prison was seldom free from typhoid and infectious disease. "Que voulez-vous?" he added, with a despairing

shrug of the shoulders. "The place is atrociously drained, and the very drinking water contaminated by sewage. How can we expect to be free from disease? We do all we can; but till the place is thoroughly overhauled, and in many parts rebuilt, it will always remain what it is—the unhealthiest prison in Siberia. I have served at the mines of Karâ and Nertchinsk, but never had a quarter of the work that I have here."

We then visited the kitchen, bakery, and bath-house. Both the former were brightly lit up, and the evening meal was being prepared, for it was now nearly six o'clock. The kitchen was clean and spacious, with brick flooring and two huge coppers, in one of which some savoury smelling shtchi was simmering; the other contained buckwheat gruel. Adjoining the kitchen was a smaller cooking shed, used exclusively for the hospital *cuisine*. The bakery was likewise clean and well arranged, but the light of a solitary lantern showed me but little of the bath-house, a large brick building built to accommodate thirty prisoners at a time.

It was now dark. "Perhaps you would prefer to visit the women's prison in the morning," said my friend the doctor, when we once more stood in the courtyard. "But please do as you like. It rests entirely with you." Being unwilling to put my patient and good-natured guide to further trouble, I arrange to meet him at 10 a.m. the following day. "I am sorry to say I am on duty to-night," he says, "or would have asked you to sup with me at home." Bidding him adieu, I return through the dark sloppy streets to *my* frugal meal, which consists of a leathery beefsteak, soaking in grease, and a hunch of heavy, pulpy, black bread. My dinner, eaten in semi-darkness, and interrupted at intervals by the ominous squeaks and scratchings of my unwelcome fellow-lodgers, does not take long, and, the cheerless meal over, I spread out my rugs on the filthy floor, and, regardless of probable nightmare, retire to rest—with the rats!

* * * * *

The doctor was awaiting me next morning at the gates of the women's prison, which is

distant two or three hundred yards from that of the men, and over which the matron, a slight-looking woman, with grey hair, neatly dressed in black, accompanied us.

This prison is a long low building of unpainted wood, enclosed by a stockade of rough-hewn logs about fifteen feet high. Though primitive and rough-looking from the outside, the spotless cleanliness within was a pleasant contrast after the dirt, stenches, and overcrowding of the men's peresilni. The kameras of the women varied considerably in size, from twenty feet long by fifteen feet broad, to fifty feet by thirty. All were spotlessly clean, the wooden floors scraped to a snowy whiteness, and not a speck of dust to be seen on the whitewashed walls or brightly polished windows. The sleeping platforms were built on practically the same plan as those of the men, and ran down the centre of the kameras, and in some cases round the walls. Some had strips of gaudy carpet laid between them, and many of the exiles had provided themselves with pillows and light mattresses. Each exile had

a thick blanket marked with the Government stamp. In the corner of every kamera was a sacred ikon and lamp, of more costly workmanship than I had yet seen in any of the prisons. The atmosphere in all the rooms (of which there were perhaps a dozen) was sweet and pure, and some of the window-sills were even ornamented with pots of flowers. Far from being overcrowded, many of the rooms were almost empty. The sanitary arrangements were in a distant part of the yard, and were clean and in good order, while, being a fine warm day, the doors and windows of every kamera were left wide open, to freely admit air and sunshine.

An odour of tea permeated the first criminal kamera we entered. Ten or twelve women, of various ages, were seated on the floor round a hissing brass samovar, flanked by loaves of rye bread, eggs, kalatchi, and a jar of honey. All were in grey convict dress, and wore clean white-linen handkerchiefs wound neatly round their heads, without quite concealing the hair, for in Russian prisons the fair sex is not deprived, as

in England, of this latter adornment. The women rose as we entered, and made a "waist bow," greeting us in a low tone as they did so, after which, at a sign from my companion, they re-seated themselves and continued their meal. The elder women looked cheerful and contented, the younger girls plump and rosy, while all were scrupulously clean and neat in dress and person. Some needlework, two or three books from the prison library, and a bunch of wild flowers in a tin drinking-cup, were laid beside them on the sleeping platform. There was a domestic, peaceful air about the scene, far more suggestive of cottage than prison life.

"These are not all going east," said the doctor in French. "That one"—pointing to a pretty, fair-haired girl—"is only in for three months, on a charge of begging by fraud, and will complete her sentence here. How is your baby, Maria?" he added in a louder tone; at which Maria hung her head and blushed scarlet, and her companions laughed heartily. The girl was a professional vagrant, who, to excite compassion, had patrolled

the streets of Tiumen, carrying a log of wood rolled up in swaddling clothes.

The prison contained 137 women in all, but some thirty or forty had left in the morning with the gang for Yevlevoi, *en route* to the east. Most of the women were undergoing sentences for theft of various kinds, and at least one-third were prostitutes from St. Petersburg and other large towns. There were five cases of murder (two of them for that of illegitimate children), three of manslaughter, and two of wounding with intent to kill. Thirty-nine of the prisoners were (like Maria) merely imprisoned for short terms, varying from two weeks to six months, and were to complete their sentences in Tiumen.

Having visited all the criminal kameras, some of which differed from the first with regard to size, but all of which were as clean and well kept, we entered the political cells. There are six of these boxes, for I can call them nothing else. Although they are light, clean, and airy, it seemed to me that, considering the size of the criminal kameras, more space might have been allowed for

State prisoners. These cells measured only twelve feet by ten feet, but were lofty enough for rooms treble the size. In each was a small wooden table, a stool, an iron bedstead (with clean linen sheets and pillows), and a narrow wooden shelf for books, plates, a drinking-cup, etc. One only was occupied by a young woman in ordinary blue serge dress, who had apparently been smoking incessantly for some hours, for she was almost invisible for cigarette-smoke. She had been here five weeks, but looked well enough in health, though somewhat pale, and anxious, she told me, to reach her destination (Tobolsk) as soon as possible. In the latter city she was to reside for three years (for what offence I did not inquire), and to be received in a family as governess, a situation she had formerly held at Odessa.

"Have you any complaints to make as to food or treatment, mademoiselle?" I asked in French.

"The food is ample, but rather coarse," was the answer. "But I am not a great eater, and white bread, eggs, and butter are, luckily, cheap."

"And exercise and the ordinary comforts of life—what of them?"

"I usually walk for two or three hours a day in the courtyard in fine weather, but it is entirely optional, and there are no fixed hours. I have only to ring this bell"—pointing to a brass knob in the wooden wall—"and the door is opened; indeed, in hot weather, it is seldom shut. As for comforts, I need not tell you there are none, and it is very difficult to get things washed. I have sometimes sent mine to criminal prisoners who undertake to wash them, but they are often sent off in the mean time, and I never see my things again."

"Then, as regards actual treatment by the governor and prison officials, you have nothing to complain of?"

"No. They are civil and obliging enough. I have never set eyes on the governor," she added. "He seldom visits the women's prison, I am told, unless specially summoned by the matron. But if you have any influence, monsieur," she added, as I was leaving, "please get

me sent on to Tobolsk as soon as possible. There, at any rate, I shall be in comparative liberty."

I have given the above conversation exactly as it took place, and can answer for its accuracy, as, on the pretext of taking notes of this lady's cell, I wrote down her remarks, word for word, as they fell from her lips.

There is no hospital in the women's prison. Cases of sickness are treated in the infirmary of the main building, where there is a general, infectious, and lying-in ward. I visited, however, the kitchens, bakery, and bath-house, which, being of wood, had a somewhat rough and primitive appearance, but which were as clean and well kept, in every respect, as those of the men.

We now proceed to visit the prison for voluntary exiles, a large barrack-like wooden building, standing by itself and surrounded by a rough stockade. As we pass the main building, the governor is standing ät the gate, superintending the departure of a couple of dozen telegas, laden with the luggage of the gang that has just left.

Seven or eight empty carts are waiting the sick from the prison, and women and children from the shed we are approaching. There are no sentries visible, and only one soldier on duty inside, who unbars the heavy gates and admits us. The interior of the prison, which is in semi-darkness, reminds one of a huge barn, for there are no partitions or separate kameras. The place looks dirty and uncared for, and cobwebs hang from the blackened rafters. Two sleeping platforms run down the centre of the room, parallel to each other, and smaller ones round three sides of the log walls. Here are confined over two hundred and thirty men, women, and children, who have left, in many cases, a comfortable home in Europe, for self-imposed banishment in Siberia.

A large brick stove in a corner of the kamera made the latter very hot, and the atmosphere was oppressive, for there were no appliances for ventilation, nor escape for the vitiated air, especially as the windows, of which there were but four, were out of reach, and the only doorway was

low and narrow. Most of the women were in peasant dress, and had managed to keep themselves clean and neat, notwithstanding the dirt and squalor; but the children, poor little souls! had pinched white faces and a prematurely old look that was pitiful to see. The men (who were only sixteen in number) were all old, some almost decrepit, and going into exile more from necessity than choice, in most cases with some son or daughter who had hitherto worked for and supported them. It was a sad scene; nearly every face bore traces of sorrow and suffering, and a kind of anxious, apprehensive look that I had never seen among the convicts. Only the most abandoned attempted to keep up an appearance of gaiety, but even their smiles were hard, and their laughter forced and unnatural.

Near the entrance, a party of twenty women and children were preparing to join the convoy on the point of starting, the telegas we had seen while crossing the road. Among the number were four figures that specially attracted my attention—a woman of about thirty-five years of age,

with refined, delicate features, and three girls whose ages ranged from eight to sixteen years, and whose relationship to the elder woman was at once apparent by their similarity of expression and clear blue eyes. It was touching to see the care with which the poor woman, with the aid of a large red woollen shawl and many safety-pins, was muffling up her youngest, who was crying bitterly.

"Come, little one," said my good friend the doctor, kindly; "don't cry. The journey will soon be over. Where for, matoushka?" he added, addressing the mother.

"Nertchinsk," replied the poor soul, her lips twitching at the first kind words she had heard for many a weary day. She was a native of Nijni-Novgorod, and was accompanying her husband, a criminal convict who had left for Yevlevoi that morning.

I noticed that the inmates of this kamera were split up into cliques, or parties, according to their nationality or station in life. Those who possessed means, however small, were easily

distinguished from others travelling entirely at Government expense. Among the latter was a shrill-voiced, wicked-looking Armenian, with jet-black eyes and pearly teeth, clothed in a ragged but picturesque garment of bright colours, with heavy gold jewellery at her ears and throat, who was relating questionable anecdotes in a loud tone of voice to a group of loud-voiced, brazen-faced women, whose behaviour and gestures proclaimed them as loose and abandoned as herself, and who, by their laughter, appeared (or wished to appear) as though they looked upon Siberian exile rather as a joke than otherwise. Standing by was a young girl about seventeen years old, with a baby at her breast, who was looking longingly at the noisy harridans, as if even their society would have been better than none; while sitting apart from the rest were a couple of women in Tartar dress, with greasy black hair plastered over their temples, and a vacant, stupid look on their white pasty faces. The better class affected the dark corners. In one, a party of five or six respect-

able-looking women were gathered round a refined-looking old lady, with snow-white hair and dark eyes, who was dispensing tea from a samovar in a quiet, ladylike manner, quaintly at variance with her surroundings. Notwithstanding her age, she was the only one of all this strange, motley crowd that looked in any way composed or at her ease. All the rest appeared restless and uneasy, and continually on the move, as if momentarily expecting a summons to prepare for the road. What with the sharp, shrill sound of women's voices, the crying of children, and clatter of stout hobnailed shoes on the hollow flooring, the noise was deafening.

"There is a French woman," suddenly says the doctor, pointing to the solitary figure of a girl lying at full length on a secluded part of one of the wall sleeping platforms. As we approach she rises, and with some *coquetterie* hastily throws off the borrowed grey prison cloak that has covered her shoulders. She is pretty, and wears a fawn-coloured gown of the latest

fashion, much worn and frayed by travel, and a fur boa. A white embroidered petticoat (now creased and dirty) is visible, while her small shapely hands and feet are encased in *gants de suèdes* and, evidently, Parisian *chaussures*, the latter now, alas! thickly plastered up to the ankles with mud.

"Hers is a curious story," says the doctor in Russian. "She was employed at Madame ——'s" (naming a celebrated French dress-maker in Moscow), "but took up with a young scamp who committed forgery, and was sentenced to fifteen years at the mines. The girl had money of her own, which she has sent on to a firm at Irkoutsk. In a couple of years or so, her lover will obtain his provisional liberty, and they will be married."

"Oui, monsieur, je suis Parisienne!" answered the pretty *couturière*, with a bright, engaging smile that recalled sunny memories of the fair French city. "No; I do *not* like what I have seen of Siberia," she added with emphasis. "Mais que voulez-vous? J'ai suivie mon amant."

"But why did you not travel separately by post to Irkoutsk? Thence to the mines is but a short distance, and you could have met him there."

"Oh, monsieur, c'est trop cher, et la route est si dangereuse. Ici au moins je suis près du lui. S'il tombait malade, je serais là pour le soigner."

There was no more to be seen. Having thanked my guide for his kindness and attention, I bade him good-bye and left the prison.

* * * * *

Appended is the death-rate in the Tiumen Peresilni for the last four years. As in the case of Tomsk, the year 1890 is incomplete.

TIUMEN FORWARDING PRISON. DEATH RATE.

Years—	1887.	1888.	1889.	1890.
Number of exiles of all denominations passed through	20,098	19,966	18,281	—
Deaths	184	183	158	177

CHAPTER XII.

A WORD FOR SIBERIA.

A FEW months ago I obtained, not without considerable difficulty, an introduction to the famous French executioner, M. Deibler. From the descriptions given me of this individual (by those who had, in most cases, never set eyes upon him), I had always pictured the modern M. de Paris as a cruel, cold-blooded ruffian, with no object or interests in the world beyond those connected with his ghastly calling. I had seen him once only, and then not sufficiently near to distinguish his features. The Place de La Roquette was thronged that grey wintry morning with the scum of Paris, and it was not safe to venture too near the terrible engine of death, at the foot of which, attired in frock-

coat and shiny silk hat, stood M. Deibler, awaiting his ninety-eighth victim. That the man was but an instrument of the law never, on that occasion, entered into my mind. My attention was riveted on the pallid, half-dazed wretch who tottered up to the guillotine, and was violently thrown forward on to the *bascule* by the *aides*, to become, in less than two seconds from the closing of the *lunette*,* a headless, quivering corpse. But M. Deibler was, to me, the most important actor in this scene, and the quiet, indifferent manner in which he conducted the proceedings repelled and disgusted me. The horror of the sight overshadowed the fact that, had not the operator been cool and collected, a frightful mishap might have been the result.

"Do not go and see him. He is a rough, coarse fellow and will probably insult you," said every one.

But I had just completed an inspection of the prisons of Paris, and M. Deibler is, in his way, as much a public institution as Mazas or Saint

* The wooden collar that keeps the criminal's head in place.

Lazare. Disregarding, therefore, the advice of my friends, I set out alone one bright May morning, and at last succeeded in ferreting out the residence of the dreaded M. de Paris, at No. 3, Rue Vicq d'Azir, in a dirty squalid street not far from the Gare du Nord.

Having been ushered into a small, but clean and neatly furnished apartment *au deuzième*. what did I find? A stout, grey-haired old gentleman of about sixty years of age, with a good-humoured, pleasant expression, but somewhat shy, nervous manner, occasioned by chronic dyspepsia, a complaint to which the executioner is a martyr. As I entered the room Madame Deibler, a comely, well-dressed woman, begged me to be careful of the tortoises (five of which were crawling about the polished *parquet*), for they were "papa's" pets. "Papa," who was in carpet slippers, apologized for his untidy appearance and politely offered me refreshment. His manner was suave and gentle. In short, I found my host a kindly, domestic man, devoted to his wife and children, with a decided taste for

"Bock," and a keen dramatic critic on Sunday nights; in a word, a *bon bourgeois Parisien.* I was warned that everything to do with the profession is rigidly tabooed *en famille.* "Ne lui parlez pas de la guillotine," whispered his son as he admitted me; "cela lui fait de la peine."

So it is with regard to the Russian prisons. I left England, on the last occasion, for Siberia, fully prepared to meet with horrors of every description, notwithstanding the fact that I had already crossed the latter country from Chinese to European frontier without once seeing or hearing of a single case of mismanagement, much less cruelty, connected with the penal system. This was in 1887. Under the circumstances, it is scarcely surprising that the almost weekly reports of "Siberian atrocities" that appeared in the English press during the years 1888–89 should have filled me with blank astonishment, and an eager desire to revisit a country of which, if these accounts were reliable, I must have formed (and published) such false impressions. The reader now knows

the result of my investigations, which, I would submit, goes to prove that two, at least, of the prisons that have been described as unfit for human habitation are, on the whole, as cleanly and well-conducted as those of most other civilized nations. The forwarding prisons of Tomsk and Tiumen, in particular, have been blazoned to the world as dens of filth and iniquity. With the exception of one kamera at Tiumen, I found them, after careful examination, to compare favourably with many of the penal establishments of Western Europe. It has been a case of Deibler over again.

The late Lord Brougham, in reviewing a work of the celebrated traveller, Adolph Erman, wrote as follows :—

"It is really pleasant to find a deviation from the established routine of books about Russia. These are now nearly all concocted upon one and the same plan. The recipe is as exact as any in Mrs. Rundell, and is as conscientiously adhered to by literary cooks, as the great artist's invaluable precepts are by knights and ladies of

the ladle. Tyranny, misery, and the knout are the chief ingredients of the savoury dish. This is the substance of the mess, which, being handsomely garnished with lying anecdotes of horrible cruelties practised upon the unfortunate population, is deemed sufficiently dainty to set before the public; and is forthwith devoured as genuine and nutritive food by the large body of simpletons who take type for a guarantee of veracity."

These words were written many years ago. Siberia was then almost as unknown to travellers as Central Africa at the present day. Two or three Englishmen, at the most, had visited the country chiefly with a scientific or commercial object, and with no interest whatever in the working of the exile system, political or criminal. There was, in those days, some excuse to be made for those who credited the tales of aggression and cruelty that occasionally reached us, for no reliable evidence to the contrary was forthcoming. That this is not now the case, I propose to show by the following extracts taken haphazard from the works of the most recent

Siberian travellers, and commencing with the evidence of writers as far back as 1840.

(1) "In travelling to and from Siberia we have frequently met the prisoners on the road, and they are invariably accompanied by a number of sledges, which are provided by Government in case of sickness and infirmity. *That those who conduct themselves properly are rarely ill-treated we are fully convinced.* We have often heard those who have been banished to Siberia, after they have been some time established there, assert how much better their condition is, and that they would advise their friends at home, if possible, to come out there by way of bettering themselves" ("Recollections of Siberia in 1840–41," by C. Herbert Cottrell. Parker: London, 1852).

(2) "In the ostrog at Ostashika a troop of exiles was halting for the day. There were ten women among them who showed themselves at the barred windows of their lodging, and if we were to judge by their boisterous mirth, they were neither dissatisfied with their past journey,

nor troubled with care about their future destiny. With every train of them are several waggons drawn by post-horses, to carry the women and old and infirm men. It is but rarely that one sees especial offenders with fetters on their legs during the march."

Speaking of Irkoutsk the same writer says:—

"The respectable condition in which we found the population of Irkoutsk was the more gratifying when we came to consider that many members of it were the descendants of criminals. I have on many occasions visited the (prison) workshops of the curriers, smiths, carpenters, and turners, and have always found them in excellent order, and occupied by healthy and cheerful artisans. I have often heard intelligent and reflecting Russians mention as an almost inexplicable paradox that the peasants condemned for crime to become settlers in Siberia, all, without exception and in a very short time, change their habits and lead an exemplary life; yet it is certain that a sense of the benefit conferred on them by the gift of personal freedom is the sole

cause of this conversion" ("Travels in Siberia," by Adolph Erman, Gold Medallist of Royal Geographical Society, London. Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans: London, 1848).

(3) Anent political exiles, Mr. Hill writes:

"The political exiles, as soon as the first year or two of their exile removes the restraints which are first imposed in respect to the place of their abode and their confinement, enter without any moral stain into the society, wherever it is found, of the same rank as that to which they belonged when in their state of freedom in Russia" ("Travels in Siberia," by S. S. Hill. Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans: London, 1854).

(4) Of a convict establishment in the Trans-baïkál, Mr. Collins writes:

"The men were well clad, and, in visiting the prison hospital and quarters, I found the arrangements for their health and sleeping clean and comfortable. Cooks were preparing dinner for the prisoners. I tasted of the soup, bread, and 'kassia' (kvas?) made from buckwheat, and found them good and well-prepared. There were

a number on the sick list, but they were in a warm, clean room, with clean beds and clothing, and with a separate kitchen where proper diet was prepared for them" ("A Land Journey through Siberia," by Percy McDonough Collins. Appleton: London, 1860).

(5) "In reality our ideas of Siberia are altogether besides the truth. With the winter's snows we should contrast the flower-covered plains of summer, the luxuriant cornfields and purple vineyards of autumn in Southern Siberia. Of late years the traditional horrors of exile over the Ourals have greatly altered for the better. The worst are chained, but, save in the vicinity of towns through which they pass, great leniency is usually shown to the 'unfortunates,' as the exiled are styled by the country people. The women and children are usually conveyed in waggons, or, further north, in reindeer or dog sledges; while political prisoners of rank, when once they are clear of the large cities, may be seen consorting with the officers of the guard and sharing their meals" ("Countries of the

World," by R. Brown, M.A. Cassell and Co. : London, 1875).

(6) "J'ai eu plusieurs foix l'occasion de recontrer quelqu'un de ces convois; les prisonniers ne sont pas escortés comme on pourrait le supposer par des cosaques a-cheval, et la lance au poing, mais simplement par quelques soldats de l'infanterie regulière. Je n'ai jamais été temoin d'aucun acte de brutalité. Les condamnés ne m'ont paru ni mieux, ni plus mal traités que ceux de toute autre nation civilisée. Generalement les exilés politiques ne sont point astreints à un travail forcé; on les intérne dans une ville, ou un village quelconque, ou ils demeurent libre de vivre a leur guise sous la surveillance de l'autorité."

Again: "Nous depassons un convoi de deportés, les uns à pied, les autres assis sur de petites charéttes et escorté par une douzaine de soldats d'infanterie réguliere qui n'ont pas l'air de les surveiller de bien près. Aucun n'a les férs au pieds. Ces gens me paraissent traités avec autant d'humanité qu'ils le seraient chez

nous" ("À travers la Sibérie," par E. Cotteau. Hachette and Cie.: Paris, 1888).

(7) Alluding to Siberian exile, M. E. Boulangier, the well-known French traveller, writes:

"Je dois prier ici mes lecteurs anglais, americains, allemands, de se calmer, de ce reassurer même, car ils ont quelquefois l'indignation facile; et trop grande, vraiment, est leur sollicitude pour des individus, qu'on ne peut cependant pas traiter mieux que les honnêtes gens. Dans leur sort miserable, mais merité, ils [the prisoners] ne manquent de rien: leur nourriture est bonne, leur logement salubre et aéré" ("Notes de Voyage en Sibérie," par E. Boulangier. Paris: 1891).

(8) Mr. Julius Price, a correspondent of the *Illustrated London News*, who, only last year, accompanied the Wiggins expedition to Siberia, thus describes the condition of political exiles at the present day:

"In the case of a well-connected and educated man being sent from, say, Moscow or St. Petersburg, or some other remote Siberian

village, the punishment must be a severe one. When, however, instead of an out-of-the-way village, he is consigned to a biggish town like Yeniseïsk or Krasnoyarsk, his fate is certainly not so hard. He is allowed to live how and where he pleases; if he has money of his own he is permitted to receive it; and, if he is a sociable man, he will soon find out that he is not treated as an outcast even by the officials, who, at any rate at Yeniseïsk, are, I hear, the very embodiment of courtesy and politeness, though I believe it to be the same all over Siberia; and he will probably soon settle down to his new life, and, as is often the case when the sentence is not a 'life' one, he will eventually decide to remain in a country which, though not all *couleur de rose*, is certainly not all black" (*Illustrated London News*, February 28, 1891).

(9) The opinion of a still more recent traveller:

"It is right to let it be known that many tales of Russian exiles and convict life are as imaginary as those of the 'Arabian

Nights,' and that much of the 'Russian news' is manufactured in countries hostile to Russia, and by Nihilists and Socialists who hate all restraint, and violate all human and divine laws which hinder the execution of their schemes" ("Across Russia," by C. A. Stoddard. Chapman and Hall: London, 1891).

(10) The name of Captain Wiggins, in connection with Asiatic Russia, is well known in England. There is probably no Englishman living with greater experience of Siberia, its people, and prisons than the Karâ Sea explorer. The following article, therefore, published on November 21, 1878, by the *Newcastle Chronicle*, especially deserves notice:—

"Captain Wiggins has had many opportunities, during his visits, of thoroughly studying the system of exile from other parts of the Russian Empire, which is such a prominent subject in connection with Siberia, and, like others who have personally investigated it, he has arrived at conclusions very different from those popularly entertained. The captain declares that not one-

third of these time-service exiles elect to make the return journey to their former homes. They find that life is easier and pleasanter in the land to which they have been forcibly sent, and they end by becoming free settlers in the country of their adoption."

(11) The following is an article which appeared in the *Standard* newspaper of November, 1879, entitled "The Future of Siberia":—

"Siberia, to the mind of Europe, is associated with nothing but horror. One connects it with the crack of the Bashkir Cossack's whips, with the groans of wretched exiles dying—or, worse still, living—in the mines of Nertchinsk, and with cold and misery. In reality these ideas, though firmly imbedded in the English mind, are altogether erroneous if they are to be accepted as true of Siberia at large, or of the state of matters in that country at present. Doubtless the unfortunates who are sent to the penal colonies of Siberia are not pampered to any alarming extent, but that they are nowadays treated with the severity that they were in the times of Peter,

Catherine, Paul, and even Nicholas, is entirely untrue. In the vast number of cases, exile to Siberia is a very different matter from what banishment to Tasmania or New South Wales used to be. In the first place, as a rule, the Russian convicts go from a bad climate to a better, and are in such company that the disgrace of transportation gets much modified. Only criminals of the deepest dye work in the mines. These mines are, however, not all underground; they may consist of gold washeries, or the exile may be set to the almost pleasurable excitement of searching for gems. But not over one-fourth of the Siberian miners are convicts, and a recent explorer is even of opinion that the latter are in better circumstances physically, and lead quite as comfortable, and more moral lives than the corresponding class of free men in America, England, or Australia. Banishment to Siberia has been overdone, and thus the mischief is righting itself by the natural law of compensation. It has long since ceased to be a disgrace, it is rapidly ceasing to be a punishment."

(12) Mr. Charles Cook, who, for religious purposes, lately visited the prisons of St. Petersburg and Moscow, writes as follows of those establishments:—

"My first step was to obtain permission to visit the gaols. As so many disclosures had recently been made, friends both in England and Russia prophesied failure; but M. Galkine Vrasky at once gave me permission to visit the prisons, to speak to the prisoners, and to give away copies of Holy Writ. I have never met with kinder officials than I have met in the prisons of Russia. They seem to have as much interest in the men as ourselves. Of the prisons themselves I cannot complain; they are far better than others I have visited in Europe; and if those in Siberia were as well-kept and managed, there could not have been the outcry which has so startled the civilized world" ("The Prisons of the World," by Charles Cook. Morgan and Scott: London, 1891 *).

* I am glad to be able to inform Mr. Cook that the Tomsk forwarding prison is now (as regards management and

The name of the Rev. Dr. Lansdell is sufficient guarantee for the veracity of his testimony. The doctor, who in 1879 minutely inspected nearly every prison and *étape* in Siberia, sums up thus :—

"I have met with a deep and almost universal conviction that the prisons of Siberia, compared with those of other countries, are intolerably bad. This I cannot endorse. Comparing the convicts of the two nations (England and Russia) as they now are, and taking the three primary needs of life—clothing, food, and shelter,—the Russian convict proves to be fed more abundantly, if not better, than the English convict; and the clothing of the two, having regard to the dress of their respective countries, is very similar. Siberian prisons have not fittings of burnished brass; but then, neither have the houses of the Siberian people. A convict's labour in Siberia is certainly lighter than in England; he has more privileges; friends may see him oftener, and bring him food;

cleanliness) nearly equal to any prison in St. Petersburg or Moscow.

and he passes his time not in the seclusion of a cell, but among his fellows, with whom he may lounge, talk, and smoke. . . .

"I have now followed the exiles from Moscow all across Siberia, and, with the exception of the mines at Nertchinsk and Dui (Sakhalin), have seen them under the varying circumstances in which they live. Looking at the matter calmly and dispassionately, I am bound to say that exile to Siberia no longer calls up to my mind the horrors it did formerly. I am quite prepared to believe that instances have occurred of bad management, oppression, and cruelty. I have already quoted some cases, but that the normal condition of things has been exaggerated I am persuaded" ("Through Siberia," by Henry Lansdell, D.D., F.R.G.S. Sampson Low and Co.: London, 1882).*

It is a significant fact that I have myself searched carefully and thoroughly through the works of authors on this subject for the past ten years, but, with the exception of Mr. Kennan's

* For other letters on Siberian exile, see Appendix.

Century articles, and the writings of political and other exiles (which latter can hardly be accepted as unbiased or reliable evidence), can find no corroboration whatever of the terrible state of things said to exist in Siberia. The nearest approach to confirmation is contained in a work entitled 'Five Thousand Miles in a Sledge,' by a Mr. Gowing.* The reader must own, however, that this gentleman's evidence is, next to that of the writer that I have already quoted, comparatively valueless. Mr. Gowing writes :—

"What is the truth about the convict system? Is the fate of the exiles as terrible as has been represented? These are the questions with which one who has recently been in Siberia is assailed on every hand. . . . In 1879 the Rev. H. Lansdell travelled through Siberia armed with a letter from the Minister of the Interior, which opened all the prison doors to him. On his return to England he published an account of his travels, in which he completely white-

* "Five Thousand Miles in a Sledge," by Lionel F. Gowing. Chatto and Windus: London, 1889.

washed the Russian authorities. . . . In 1885 Mr. George Kennan, accompanied by Mr. G. A. Frost, started on an expedition to Siberia for the express purpose of making a careful study of the exile system. . . . Which opinion is correct? That of Dr. Lansdell, or that of Mr. George Kennan? The opinion strongly impressed on the mind of the present writer [Mr. Gowing] is that, although Dr. Lansdell has dispelled some false stories in regard to Russia's treatment of her prisoners, political and social, he has been misled into representing a picture of Siberian prison management which is far too roseate hued, and which does infinitely more credit to the Russian Government than it deserves. . . . The present author's direct experience on the subject is confined to the meeting of a few convoys of exiles on the road, and to *the casual inspection of the outside walls* of several prisons and *étapes*."

Unfortunately the last sentence somewhat detracts from the value of this writer's opinion as an authority on prison management, at any

rate in Siberia. The evidence of outside walls is scarcely conclusive! Even Mr. Gowing, however, admits that the prisoners *looked* contented and well clothed. For in another part of the book we find—

"The largest train [of exiles] we met near Atchinsk must have numbered fully a hundred persons, guarded by only half a dozen soldiers. They appeared to be warmly clad in sheepskin shoubas, and, gaze at them curiously as we would, it was difficult to gather from these passing glimpses any vivid impression as to the degree of the long-suffering they endured."

To come then to plain facts, who is answerable for the false impressions that at present exist in England anent the Russian penal system? and upon whose authority do the detractors of the latter base their accusations? Surely the absurd canards that periodically appear in the English newspapers are scarcely worth serious notice, for are they not, in nine cases out of ten, anonymous, and is not the information they contain as a rule unsupported, save by such

headings as "News has reached us from Vienna," or "News comes from Berlin"? * It can surely only be the uneducated classes that are taken in by such groundless catch-penny fabrications as these.

Who, then, is responsible for the Siberian atrocity scare, if one may so call it, in England? The answer is simple: (1) Mr. George Kennan, of the *Century Magazine;* and (strange as it may seem) (2) fiction, which latter has, in the excitement of the moment, been accepted as fact. A work published in London about a year ago (which has run through eight or nine editions) is largely answerable for the mis-statements concerning Russian prison life that have obtained publicity throughout England. It is scarcely credible that in this practical country such a book should be taken seriously. That the writer himself considers it purely in the light of a romance is evident by his "Author's Notes" at the end of the volume, in which he informs

* It is a remarkable fact that "news" scarcely, if ever, comes direct from the fountain head.

his readers that the work is based chiefly upon Mr. Kennan's articles, various Socialistic works, "Called Back," and "The Russians of To-day." Upon the latter work I have already commented, and, I hope, convinced the reader that it is, so far as regards Siberia, entirely unreliable. "Called Back," though an interesting tale, is scarcely accurate in its statements, as the following remarks by Dr. Lansdell will show :—

"Besides the suspicion of friends," writes the latter, "I have been confronted with the Siberian chapter in the story of 'Called Back,' by Hugh Conway, and have been asked how that tallies with *my* account. Hereupon I would first inquire: 'Is the story fiction or fact?' As fiction I have little to say to the novel except that the author has not learnt his lesson perfectly. When, however, he says, 'I expect to be believed,' does the author wish his readers to understand that he really went to Siberia, and saw the facts he records? If so, then I detect in 'Called Back' another of the series of apocryphal books on that much-abused country, and can only regret

that the popular tale will 'carry the lie round the world, while Truth is putting on her boots.' . . . Will the reader be good enough to judge the grounds of my adverse judgment? The hero of 'Called Back' goes to Siberia in search of a prisoner, and on arriving at Petersburg he says: 'We received a passport authorizing me to travel to the end of the Czar's Asiatic dominions if I thought fit, which was worded in such a way that it obviated the necessity of obtaining a fresh passport wherever a fresh Government district was to be traversed.' Again: 'All convicts were first sent to Tobolsk, . . . whence they were drafted off, at the pleasure of the Governor-General, to various places. . . . If I wished, the Governor-General of Tobolsk should be telegraphed to, but as I was bound anyway to go to that town, it would be just as well if I made my inquiries in person;' and it was at Tobolsk the author expected to 'await the pleasure of the Governor-General.' Now, here is a small pickle of mistakes to begin with! A passport does not entitle the holder to travel by post, but a

podarojna, which gives a claim to horses between two points; but it is immaterial whether, in reaching one's destination, the traveller passes through one Government or half a dozen. Next, all convicts are *not* distributed from Tobolsk, but from Tiumen. It is here the author should have gone to make his imaginary inquiries, and then he would not have been 'bound anyway to go to Tobolsk,' but could have driven direct to Tomsk. Besides this, the Governor-General did not live at Tobolsk, but seven hundred miles distant at Omsk! Next our author's geography is somewhat faulty, as is his knowledge of posting customs. He says: 'A trifle of some four hundred miles from Ekaterinburg to Tiumen' (this should be two hundred and four), and 'at the east bank of the Irtysh Siberia proper begins' (this is wrong by a hundred and fifty miles). Then he speeds on so fast that he 'left the yemstchik no time for refreshment.' But why should he? Does he think that the yemstchik, like an interpreter, accompanies one all the way, or has he to learn that he merely drives the

traveller to the next station, perhaps an hour's run, and then goes back with his horses? . . . The author of 'Called Back,' on his way to Irkoutsk, talks of prison rooms 'reeking with filth, the floors throwing out poisonous emanations.' I beg the author's pardon, but this is great nonsense. I have been asked by friends more than once, 'Are not Russian prisons dirty?' To which the answer has been both 'Yes' and 'No.' There are prisons in England where the inmate of a cell must have every bit of brass polished, and his habitation spotlessly clean. . . . In France some of the cell floors are polished with the heel of a wine-bottle and elbow-grease; and I have seen prison schools and asylums so hyper-clean, even in Russia, that, to use a familiar expression, 'one might have eaten off the floor.' Compared with buildings such as these, the average Russian prison must be allowed to be dirty . . . but if such an expression should convey to a reader's mind what it did convey to the mind of the friend who pointed out the passage to me, and who thought fæcal filth was intended

thereby, then such language is a libel. The nearest resemblance I can think of to the floor of a Russian prison is the floor of a dirty National school, over which a pack of boys have run for a week with the dirty boots of winter. I do not remember ever seeing anything in Russian prisons worse than this, and in the majority of cases things were better; whilst, as for the atmosphere, and the exaggerations talked about it, I have been in Russian prisons at all hours of the day, before some of the prisoners were up in the morning, and just before they were going to bed at night, but in none was the air so vitiated as that which some of the peasants, to my knowledge, *chose* to have in their houses; or, to come nearer home, such as I used to meet with in parochial visiting when Curate of Greenwich" ("Through Central Asia," by the Rev. H. Lansdell, D.D. Sampson Low: London, 1887).

And yet, although based upon such groundless, rubbishy foundations as those derived from "Called Back" and kindred works, the popular

novel aforementioned has, more than once, been seriously quoted in my presence as an authority on the Siberian exile system! I am told that a slip of paper on the title-page, bearing the words "Prohibited by the Government of the Czar from circulation in Russia," invests this volume with considerable importance in the eyes of English readers, who are perhaps unaware that our comic papers, *Tit-Bits* and *Ally Sloper*, frequently enjoy the same distinction!

Why is it that the British public, usually so practical and discerning, should allow itself to be blindly led by the nose and palpably deceived wherever Siberian matters are concerned? Apparently no proof of statements or personal experience of the country they so graphically describe are required of either lecturer or writer. Men are listened to with rapt attention who have never even visited Russia, much less Siberia, and who have absolutely no acquaintance with their subject beyond a smattering of knowledge extracted from that ever-fruitful source, the *Century Magazine*, the daily papers,

and the works of revolutionary writers such as Stepniak and Krapotkine. Not long ago I visited a small town in the west of England, the streets of which were placarded with posters announcing a lecture on the "Horrors of Siberia," by the vicar of the parish. I feel sure that, from a humorous point of view, the entertainment must have been well worth the modest sum charged for admittance, as I was credibly informed that the reverend gentleman who proposed to enlighten the good people of H—— on the manners and customs of Asiatic Russia, had only once in his life visited the Continent. He had been to the Paris Exhibition in 1878, and back again, but had never left England either before or since that occasion. It is more than probable, however, that every word he said was implicitly believed, and duly reported in the local, if not the London, papers. Of the competency of such a person to lecture on Siberian prisons, I leave the reader to judge; yet such cases are of frequent occurrence in England.

Those of my readers acquainted with Mr. Kennan's articles in the *Century Magazine* will scarcely question the integrity of the writer, or doubt that his investigations have been conducted with a due regard to truth. The simple, unaffected style of this gentleman's narrative proclaims it to be that of an honest and practical man, whose sole aim and object have been to represent things as they appeared to him to be. This Mr. Kennan has probably done; and I, for one, do not doubt that facts and occurrences which came under his own personal observation have been accurately reported. As regards the prisons of Tomsk and Tiumen, no two accounts could be more contradictory than those of Mr. Kennan and myself. This, however, is scarcely to be wondered at, when we consider that my visit to the penal establishments in question took place in 1890, more than four years after that of the *Century* correspondent; four years during which, the reader may rest assured, the Prisons Board have not been idle, and numberless reforms and alterations for the better have taken place.

When, in a letter already quoted, I wrote "The Tomsk prison as described by the *Century Magazine* does not exist," I did not for one moment intend to impugn Mr. Kennan's veracity, but simply to infer that, thanks to the increasing activity of the prison authorities at St. Petersburg, the Tomsk prison (as Mr. Kennan saw it) was, and is, a thing of the past. I only wish that the American journalist could himself see the Tiumen and Tomsk prisons as they are, though, judging from his previous experiences, he would scarcely recognize them.

But it is in Mr. Kennan's dealings with, and accounts of, political exiles that I venture to suggest that his statements should be received with caution. A careful perusal of the *Century* articles will show that the harrowing and blood-curdling stories which this gentleman retails are seldom based upon personal experiences, but derived chiefly from hearsay and information obtained from political offenders and their friends in Europe and America. Mr. Kennan's most thrilling anecdotes are usually prefixed by "Mr.

M—— told me," or "I was informed by Madame N——." If I remember rightly, scarcely a single instance occurs where this writer can affirm that he actually witnessed the outrages he so graphically describes.*

I fear that, led away by zeal and kindness of heart, poor Mr. Kennan has fallen a victim to the wiles of those plausible, but scarcely conscientious, "political martyrs," who in Siberia systematically waylay the traveller, and, if the latter be of a credulous nature, "fool him to the top of his bent" with tales and imaginary experiences of sorrow and suffering. I have myself met many such, especially in Irkoutsk, who, when they found it of no practical benefit, dropped the pathetic device with the alacrity of a begging

* That no restrictions are placed by the prison authorities upon free communication with political or other exiles, even Mr. Kennan admits when he writes: "We could not of course conceal wholly from the police our relations with the political exiles; but the extent and real significance of such relations were never, I think, suspected; at any rate, the telegraphic sword of Damocles did not fall upon us, and, until we reached the Transbaïkál, we did not even receive a warning" ("Siberia," by George Kennan. Osgood, McIlvaine and Co.: London, 1891).

impostor, and became cheerful, but somewhat expensive, companions with an astonishing capacity for food and drink. It should, moreover, be clearly explained to the reader that there are two classes of free politicals met with in Siberia: the genuine State offender, and the discharged criminal convict, who, on regaining his provisional liberty, elects to appear before the world as a political offender. These so-called "politicals" form at least one-third of the exiles living in provisional freedom in Siberia, and, as M. de Arnaud* justly remarks, "Magazine writers and lecturers do not hesitate, either from ignorance or design, to confound this class of flagitious criminals with the prisoners deported for political offences; because all political prisoners, murderers, etc., alike bear the common name of exile, and no other."† I can scarcely believe that Mr.

* "The New Era in Russia," by Charles A. de Arnaud. Gay and Bird: London, 1890.

† "When these (criminal) prisoners come to a settlement, or a colony, they naturally fraternize and form a society to themselves. Neither knows the crime of the other, or even the police in charge of him, but invariably they form a club, where they meet, drink tea, gossip, etc. Of course these prisoners will

Kennan should have escaped scot-free from the snares of these wolves in sheep's clothing. If so, he has been more fortunate than other travellers.

"One word," adds M. de Arnaud, "about the young girls torn from their homes and sent to Siberia as political prisoners. I will here state that every prisoner, no matter what crime he has committed—murderer, burglar, etc.—sent to Siberia, has the privilege of being accompanied by his relations, if they choose to go. For example: if the prisoner is a married man, his wife and children are allowed to go with him, and so form a family in the place of banishment. If she is a woman, she is, if married, permitted to have her

tell each other that he or she was sent to Siberia for being a 'political' by administrative process, never as a murderer or burglar, or for any other flagitious, vulgar offence. Many of them are highly educated, as we have highly educated criminals in England. When the magazine writer I have alluded to above happened to be in their neighbourhood and interviewed them, he was naturally told the same story they tell each other, namely, that they have been sent to Siberia by administrative process as 'politicals,' and never as murderers, burglars, or other vicious criminals" ("The New Era in Russia," pp. 52, 53).

family, husband, and children to accompany her; or, if single, her mother or sisters. These female relatives, especially the children of the prisoners, are the ones who are introduced to itinerant magazinists, and by them described to the world as the young girls of fourteen, sixteen, and eighteen years of age, who are torn from their homes by administrative process and sent to Siberia as 'politicals.' But these female children pose also as 'politicals,' and much sympathy has been expended in this country over their imaginary woes."

That Mr. Kennan's investigations into the Russian exile system were conducted with sincerity, and an earnest desire to get at the real truth, I freely admit, but that, in many cases, he has become the unsuspecting mouthpiece of scheming and untruthful individuals is equally manifest to any one who has ever visited Siberia, and conversed with even political exiles themselves on the subject. I am personally acquainted with a number of the latter, but have entirely failed to recognize, in the down-trodden,

dejected individuals depicted by the *Century*, my genial, hospitable friends at Tomsk and Irkoutsk, many of whom regarded Siberia, not as a land of exile, but as a home and means of existence.

I will not weary the reader with a detailed account of the improvements that have taken place within the last ten years in the working of the Siberian penal system (for the subject would need a chapter to itself), a description of the spacious and well-conducted prisons that now exist in the principal cities of Siberia, and on the island of Sakhalin. Suffice it to say that these reforms are the work of a department instituted in the Ministry of the Interior for the special supervision of prison management in 1879, the head of which, M. Galkin Vrasky, resided for over two years in Siberia and Sakhalin, with the sole object of studying (and reforming) the exile system, and with the fixed intention of eventually establishing the following programme:—

(1) To put in order and sanitary condition all prisons in Russia and Siberia.

(2) To reform the local administration (penal).

(3) To organize work (in all its branches) in the prisons.

(4) To turn the work made to good account, partly for the benefit of the prisoners.

(5) To thoroughly reform the transportation system.

That the latter scheme has, to a great extent, been successfully carried out, none who have visited Siberia within the last two years can, for an instant, doubt; and, as was clearly shown at the St. Petersburg Prison Congress of 1890, the name of Siberia is now no longer dreaded in Russia. Exile has almost ceased to be a question of moral or physical hardship. The "political" now regards it, in many cases, simply as a means to an end, an open road to the land of riches; the St. Petersburg or Moscow vagrant, as a cheap and safe conduct to the golden plains of El-Dorado.

M. Galkin Vrasky's first clause is necessarily a work of considerable difficulty and labour, but that much has already been done is shown by the

following list of prisons repaired and rebuilt during the past three or four years :—

Place.		Roubles.
Verni-Oudinsk (Siberia)		59,995
Ismael		59,820
Mazelinsk, Grodisko, Lodz		23,950
Balagansk		15,000
Nertchinsk		157,000
Zerentouisk (Siberia)		197,000
Büsk		54,310
Hospitals of Sarátov and Irkoutsk (Siberia) prisons		61,992
Khabarovka (Siberia)		109,320
Blagovestchensk (Siberia)		98,478
Étapes, or resting-places between Irkoutsk and Yakoutsk (Siberia)		33,000
Krasnoyarsk † (Siberia) (temporary prison)		47,000
Tomsk * (Siberia)		35,000
Klagan (Siberia)		15,000
Dargatch (Siberia), Bielinsk (Siberia)	*étapes*	20,000
Julava (*étape*)		5,716
Chemaka, Ponevege †, Viaznia, Vesiegormsk, Tiriberka	prisons	123,038
Gavrilovo, Tsip-Navolok	huts of detention ...	52,000

For forwarding prison hospital alone.

Place.	Roubles.
Tomsk (Siberia)	28,000
Erivan	27,040
Yanof	25,000
Grodno † (not including purchase of Jesuit convent)	25,000
Pietrokoff	31,000
Kazan	39,665
Hospital (Moscow Forwarding Prison) ...	49,000
Starya-Roussa †	128,023
Tsarytzin	267,105
Ouralsk	196,335
Total (roubles) ...	1,937,087

I should add that the majority of these sums have been expended for repairs alone, only those marked with a dagger being entirely new prisons. The above list does not include voluntary contributions, which amount to many thousands of roubles a year, the bulk of which has lately been devoted to the repairing and rebuilding of *étapes* on the great Siberian road.

As I have already stated in a previous chapter, one of the chief difficulties with which the Russian prison administration has to cope is that of finding work for the convicts. At the Goubernski at Tomsk, for instance, I found

kamera after kamera filled with idle men, who, lounging and lying about, would, I feel sure, have been only too glad of work of any kind to occupy their minds and distract their thoughts from the irksome monotony of life in gaol. Perhaps a third of the prisoners, certainly not more, were employed. I ascertained, however, that, notwithstanding all their efforts, the authorities were literally unable to find labour of any kind for the exiles outside the range of carpentering, cobbling, or cigarette-making, the cost of the raw material and its transit from Europe being so great.* Thus it is that, out of the total number of convicts sent yearly to Siberia, more than half are unemployed. This, it seems to me, is the chief blot on the Siberian penal system, for this state of affairs exists only in Siberia. In Europe labour is general throughout the prisons and gaols, and, in the central prisons of St. Petersburg and Moscow, every cell has its loom, or other appliance for work of a useful nature. I have little doubt, however, that in the

* See Appendix D.

hands of that skilful and experienced administrator, M. Galkin Vrasky, this evil will eventually be remedied. The exhibition of prison work at the St. Petersburg Congress of 1890 showed that, in this respect, there is little room for improvement in European Russia.

The following death rate of prisoners at the mines of Nertchinsk and Karâ, and on the island of Sakhalin, has only just reached me, too late for insertion in the appendix :—

DEATH RATE AT THE MINES OF SIBERIA AND ON THE ISLAND OF SAKHALIN.

Year—	1887.		1888.		1889.	
	Sick.	Died.	Sick.	Died.	Sick.	Died.
1. Mines of Nertchinsk and Karâ	1349	83	1389	81	1786	113
2. Island of Sakhalin : Districts—						
Alexandrofsk	—	—	1837	88	1914	59
Tymoff ...	—	—	1135	27	1076	11
Korsakoff ...	—	—	1625	26	1327	21

Enough, now, of prisons, lest the subject weary

my readers. If I have succeeded in convincing even a few of the latter that, from a penal point of view, Siberia is not so black as it is painted, my journey to that little-known but much-maligned country will not have been in vain. Let me repeat that I have been absolutely unbiased throughout, either for or against the Russian Government. The voyage was prompted more by my own *amour propre* than anything else, and with a view to either rectifying preconceived, and perhaps erroneous ideas, or confirming my original (and favourable) opinion as to the humane treatment of Russian exiles.

I may add that every statement anent prisons or the exile system that this book contains has been made with the utmost caution and deliberation. This is no traveller's tale from wild and unexplored regions, but a record of dry and tangible facts from a civilized city, which may (in summer) be easily and comfortably reached in less than three weeks from Charing Cross. There is no earthly reason to prevent the reader from taking his ticket and starting forthwith for Tomsk

or Tiumen, to see for himself whether I have depicted things as they really are; for, provided with proper credentials from the authorities at St. Petersburg, there would be no difficulty whatsoever in visiting any prison or *étape* throughout the country. He would then, perhaps, realize, as I have done, that the oppressed and persecuted exile is more or less of a myth, a creation of modern fiction and sensational journalism; and that, whether a Russian convict be located at Tomsk, Nertchinsk, or

> "Where God is high,
> And the Czar is far away"—

on sea-girt Sakhalin—prison life in Siberia is as endurable as in most, and more tolerable than in many, of the countries of the world.

APPENDIX A.

TOTAL NUMBER OF POLITICAL AND CRIMINAL EXILES SENT TO SIBERIA DURING THE YEARS 1887, 1888, 1889, AND 1890 (NOMBRE DES DÉPORTÉS PASSÉS EN SIBÉRIE PAR LE DÉPÔT DE TRANSFÈREMENT DE TIUMEN PENDANT LES ANNÉES 1887 À 1890).

Catégories de déportés.	Déportés des classes privilégiées.					Déportés des classes non-privilégiées.				
	Hommes.	Femmes.	Familles accompagnant volontairement les déportés.			Hommes.	Femmes.	Familles accompagnant volontairement les déportés.		
			Hommes.	Femmes.	Enfants.			Hommes.	Femmes.	Enfants.
En 1887.										
Forçats à destination ..	22	3	—	4	5	1496	116	5	230	475
Condamnés à la déportation (avec interdiction de tous les droits civiques) ..	68	1	—	6	11	2642	173	2	485	1062
Condamnés à la relégation en Sibérie (avec interdiction des priviléges sociaux)	170	13	—	23	49	—	—	—	—	—
Déportés pour vagabondage	—	—	—	—	—	1860	78	—	—	4
Exilés par leurs communes, après condamnation subie ou pour inconduite ..	—	—	—	—	—	3166	195	2	643	1612
Transférés à autre destination	10	1	—	1	—	1573	218	—	7	297
Total										16,697

Catégories de déportés.	Déportés des classes privilégiées.					Déportés des classes non-privilégiées.				
	Hommes.	Femmes.	Familles accompagnant volontairement les déportés.			Hommes.	Femmes.	Familles accompagnant volontairement les déportés.		
			Hommes.	Femmes.	Enfants.			Hommes.	Femmes.	Enfants.
En 1888.										
Forçats à destination ..	4	2	—	1	3	1785	132	—	199	414
Condamnés à la deportation (avec interdiction de tous les droits civiques) ..	68	7	—	11	19	2628	130	—	538	1134
Condamnés à la relégation en Sibérie (avec interdiction des priviléges sociaux)	200	6	—	27	38	—	—	—	—	—
Déportés pour vagabondage	—	—	—	—	—	1661	84	—	—	2
Exilés par leurs communes, après condamnation subie ou pour inconduite ..	—	—	—	—	—	3157	155	—	566	1466
Transférés à autre destination	66	5	—	7	1	1580	176	—	21	32
Total 16,501										
En 1889.										
Forçats à destination ..	3	—	—	1	4	891	76	—	148	261
Condamnés à la deportation (avec interdiction de tous les droits civiques) ..	53	—	—	6	16	2347	161	—	462	999
Condamnés à la relégation en Sibérie (avec interdiction des priviléges sociaux)	216	7	—	33	64	—	—	—	—	—
Déportés pour vagabondage	—	—	—	—	—	460	460	—	13	30
Exilés par leurs communes, après condamnation subie ou pour inconduite ..	—	—	—	—	—	3458	267	—	627	1416
Transférés à autre destination	8	—	—	—	—	1212	262	—	198	263
Total 14,422										

Catégories de déportés.	Déportés des classes privilégiées.					Déportés des classes non-privilégiées.				
	Hommes.	Femmes.	Familles accompagnant volontairement les déportés.			Hommes.	Femmes.	Familles accompagnant volontairement les déportés.		
			Hommes.	Femmes.	Enfants.			Hommes.	Femmes.	Enfants.
En 1890.										
Forçats à destination ..	2	—	—	—	—	1552	114	—	179	339
Condamnés à la deportation (avec interdiction de tous les droits civiques) ..	58	3	—	2	4	2539	148	—	495	964
Condamnés à la relégation en Sibérie (avec interdiction des privilèges sociaux)	432	15	—	26	59	—	—	—	—	—
Déportés pour vagabondage	—	—	—	—	—	1376	75	—	—	—
Exilés par leurs communes, après condamnation ou pour conduite	—	—	—	—	—	3062	179	—	621	1452
Transférés á autre destination	6	1	—	—	2	807	113	—	—	166
Total										14,854

I have given the above statistics in French in order to avoid any inaccuracies in translation.—H. DE W.

APPENDIX B.

Table of Distances from Tiumen to Tomsk (by River).

	Versts.
Tiumen	0
Yevlevoi	246
Tobolsk	406
Demiansk	457
Samarof	913
Sourgout	1178
Timsk	1690
Narym	1800
Kolpatchef	1929
Tomsk	2110

A verst is about three quarters of a mile.

APPENDIX C.

Comparison of Turkish and Yakoute Languages.

English.	Yakoute.	Turkish.
One	Bare	Bir
Two	Aki	Iki
Three	Oos	Ootch
Four	Tert	Dort
Five	Baiss	Besh
Six	Alta	Alti
Horse	Att	Att
Road	Coll	Yol
Man	Kissi	Kissi

APPENDIX D.

LETTER FROM DR. BAEDEKER ON SIBERIAN EXILE.

Wart-Eck, Queen's Road, Weston-super-Mare,
July 17, 1891.

DEAR SIR,

In answer to your favour of the 16th inst., I beg to say that most of the criticisms about Russian and Siberian prisoners, so far as they have come under my notice, contain statements of bare facts, without considering the conditions and manner of living of the greater part of the people in their own homes and in the enjoyment of liberty. To the Russian or Siberian peasant, the life and treatment in prison does not differ much from his home-life, and what, to an Englishman, might appear hard and cruel treatment, does not thus appear to the Russian. There are, of course, exceptions in cases of people who are better situated, and who find the contrast from home-life to prison-life very hard to endure. For the educated class of people there is in every prison a separate chamber and better treatment, and such prisoners are allowed to wear their own clothes. Throughout Russian and Siberian prisons I have not met with any case of cruel treatment by the officials, but they themselves, as well as the prisoners, suffer greatly

from the great numbers of prisoners for whom there is not sufficient accommodation. Most prisons are overcrowded, and fresh influxes are constantly arriving, sometimes greatly beyond the capacity of the buildings. Another evil lies in the transport system, which precludes any employment before they reach their final destination, and when they have at last arrived it is most difficult, especially in Siberia, to find work for those who are sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour, so that in very many cases the hard-labour sentence is only on paper, and strong men by hundreds and thousands are entirely left to themselves without any occupation, and in the very worst company. I have not seen any cases of cruelty practised, but generally have found the governors of prisons very kind and considerate.

I am, dear sir,

Yours sincerely,

F. W. BAEDEKER.

To Harry de Windt, Esq., F.R.G.S.

N.B.—Dr. Baedeker travelled through Siberia in 1889-1890.—H. DE W.

APPENDIX E.

LETTER FROM CHARLES DAVISSON, ESQ., ON SIBERIAN EXILE.

THE writer of the following letter is an English gentleman, Mr. Charles Davisson, who acted as interpreter to Miss Kate Marsden on her late voyage through Siberia in 1890–1891, for the purpose of studying the leprosy question. Mr. Davisson travelled from St. Petersburg to Irkoutsk, on the borders of China, visiting nearly every prison and *étape* on the way.

Hôtel Métropole, London, Oct. 23, 1891.

SIR,

In compliance with your request, I have much pleasure in stating the facts, connected with the Russian exile system, that have come under my personal observation during the last sixteen months that I have been travelling through Siberia. I do so the more willingly that one is continually seeing the grossest exaggerations and misstatements on this subject in the English newspapers.

To answer your questions :—

1. Q. How are the political and criminal prisoners in Siberia treated?

A. Infinitely better than in European Russia, for the simple reason that they are too far distant to be a source of danger to the Government or the public. Discipline is relaxed the moment Siberia is entered.

2. Q. Did you find the diet of political and criminal prisoners good and sufficient?

A. Both politicals and criminals are fed as well, the former better than the peasantry of the country. The food is of a coarse type, as in all uncivilized countries. It is, however, good and sufficient.

3. Q. Is the clothing sufficient?

A. Yes, far better than that of the Siberian peasantry.

4. Q. Is the work of prisoners optional?

A. Yes, in most cases. No prisoners are forced to work, excepting those at the mines of Karâ or Nertchinsk, and on the island of Sakhalin.

5. Q. Have prisoners any privileges?

A. Their privileges are many. Amongst others, if an exile be a tradesman, a carpenter, tailor, shoemaker, etc., he is allowed to ply his trade, paying a small percentage of his gains to the Government. I have known convicts at the Alexandrovsk prison, about forty miles from Irkoutsk, permitted to go to the latter city once a month, for orders. Prisoners are also allowed to accept money and other presents. The former is usually spent in buying white bread, tobacco, and other luxuries from the market women, who visit the prisons and *étapes* every day.

I should mention that the prison at Krasnoyarsk, in Eastern Siberia, is almost a model one. It is beautifully clean and well ventilated, while the sanitary arrangements are perfect. The next best is, perhaps, the

Alexandrovsk prison, near Irkoutsk, which is built to accommodate a thousand men.

As for the *étapes*, they are some of them rather dirty, owing to insufficient accommodation for the great numbers that annually pass through them. Under the circumstances, however, they are as clean and airy as can be expected. Of those especially well conducted, I may mention Kokinsk, Rasgonnaia (under Colonel Strijevsky), and Oudinskaya. The officials at these *étapes* are greatly assisted by their wives and daughters, who frequently go among the prisoners and distribute clothing and food.

Prison convoys are invariably divided into two classes, married and single. Unmarried girls *invariably* travel with the former class.

Political prisoners are kept *totally apart* from ordinary criminals, and always have the option of walking or driving. At all the *étapes* they are confined in separate rooms, called the dvorionskaja, or "noblemen's cells."

A large hospital for prisoners is now being built at Kansk, between Tomsk and Irkoutsk. Others will shortly be constructed in the larger towns and villages along the great post road. I am informed, on reliable authority, that, when completed, these establishments will be equal to the best European Russian hospitals.

I trust that I have satisfactorily answered your questions.

You may rely upon what I have written as a bare unprejudiced statement of facts. I am merely an impartial traveller who has kept his eyes open, and lived for nearly two years in the very midst of the exile districts. I may add that I was not a little surprised at the

facilities afforded me by the authorities for visiting the prisons and *étapes*, of which I must have seen over fifty from first to last. Speaking Russian fluently, I was permitted to converse freely with both politicals and criminals, being several times left quite alone with them.

Hoping that my evidence may be of some use in correcting the mistaken notions that have, up till now, existed in England concerning the Russian penal system,

I am, sir, yours faithfully,

CHARLES DAVISSON.

Harry de Windt, Esq., F.R.G.S.

APPENDIX F.

Tarif Alimentaire pour les Détenus dans les Prisons Russes.

Les jours.	Composition des préparations alimentaires.	Quantité par homme.	
		Mésure russe.	Mésure française.
Dimanche.	DÎNER.		
	Soupe au Vermicelle.		
	Vermicelle	24 zol.	102·36 gr.
	Viande seconde qualité	30 „	127·95 „
	Gruau d'orge perlée ..	2 „	8·53 „
	Sel	4 „	17·06 „
	Gruau.		
	Gruau de sarrasin ..	32 „	136·48 „
	Graisse de bœuf ..	5 „	21·325 „
	Sel	2 „	8·53 „
	SOUPER.		
	Soupe de Gruau.		
	Gruau de sarrasin (buck-wheat)	17 „	72·50 „
	Graisse de bœuf ..	2 „	8·53 „
	Sel	1 „	4·265 „
	Pour toute la Journée.		
	Pain de seigle	2 livres	0·819 klgr.
Lundi	DÎNER.		
	Soupe aux Choux.		
	Choux	30 zol	127·95 gr.
	Viande seconde qualité	24 „	102·36 „

Les jours.	Composition des préparations alimentaires.	Quantité par homme. Mésure russe.	Mésure française.
	Gruau d'avoine ..	4 zol.	17·06 gr.
	Farine	3 ,,	12·795 ,,
	Sel	4 ,,	17·06 ,,
	Poivre	$\frac{1}{20}$,,	0·213 ,,
	Oignons	$\frac{1}{20}$,,	0·213 ,,
	Feuilles de lauriers ..	1 ,,	4·265 ,,
	Gruau.		
	Gruau de millet (millet)	32 ,,	136·48 ,,
	Graisse de bœuf ..	5 ,,	21·325 ,,
	Sel	2 ,,	8·53 ,,
	SOUPER.		
	Soupe de Gruau.		
	Gruau de millet ..	17 ,,	72·50 ,,
	Graisse de bœuf ..	2 ,,	8·53 ,,
	Sel	1 ,,	4·265 ,,
	Pain de seigle (rye) ..	2 livres	0·819 klgr.
Mardi	Même ration que le Lundi mais le gruau de millet remplacé per le gruau de sarrasin.	—	—
Mercredi	DÎNER.		
	Soupe aux Pois.		
	Pois	32 zol.	136·48 gr.
	Farine	4 ,,	17·06 ,,
	Sel	4 ,,	17·06 ,,
	Oignons	1 ,,	4·265 ,,
	Gruau.		
	Gruau de millet ..	36 ,,	153·54 ,,
	Graisse de bœuf ..	5 ,,	21·325 ,,
	Sel	2 ,,	8·53 ,,

Les jours.	Composition des préparations alimentaires.	Quantité par homme.	
		Mésure russe.	Mésure française.
	SOUPER.		
	Soupe au Gruau.		
	Gruau de millet ..	24 zol.	102·36 gr.
	Graisse de bœuf ..	4 „	17·06 „
	Sel	1 „	4·265 „
	Pain	2 livres	0·819 klgr.
Jeudi	Même ration que le Lundi mais pour le dîner gruau de millet remplacé par le gruau de sarrasin.	—	—
	Pour le souper le gruau de millet remplacé par le gruau d'orge.	—	—
Vendredi	Même ration que le Mercredi mais le gruau de millet remplacé par le gruau de sarrasin.	—	—
Samedi	Même ration que le Lundi.	—	—

OBSERVATIONS.

(1) En cas de même prix, les provisions peuvent être remplacées : la viande de bœuf par du mouton en même quantité ou par le poisson sandat ou morue, augmentés en quantité de 50% et pas plus que deux fois par semaine. Le choux—par les pommes de terre, aussi pas plus que deux fois par semaine en comptant 204·720 gr. de choux équivalent $\frac{1}{10}$ d'un garnetz (mésure russe).

(2) Les détenus soumis au travail plus fatigant reçoivent 102·360 gr. de pain de plus par jour.

(3) Les jours de fête nationales les premiers jours de Noël et de Pâques et les douze jours de fête d'église les détenus reçoivent la ration des dimanches; les Mercredis et les Vendredis de la semaine du carnaval et de Pâques les détenus mangent gras, selon l'usage de l'église gréque orthodoxe.

(4) Pendant le Carême les soupes sont préparées sans viande, la graisse de bœuf est remplacée par l'huile de chenevis, mais les autres provisions restent les mêmes et en même quantité.

(5) Les jours des grandes fêtes la nourriture peut être améliorée par des pâtés. Le premier jour de Pâques les détenus peuvent reçevoir des œufs et le pain de Pâques, mais sous la condition de couvrir les dépenses suplémentaires avec les sommes economiques.

(6) En cas de qualité supérieure des produits alimentaires la quantité de farine et de gruau peut être diminuée, il est permis d'ajouter pendant le carême dans la soupe, du poisson et des champignons séchés, mais sous la condition de ne pas surpasser les sommes assignées par l'État, ou si des provisions pareilles sont données par voie de bienfaisance.

APPENDIX G.

LETTER FROM CAPTAIN PEMBERTON, R.E., ON SIBERIAN EXILE.

Chatham Barracks, December 23, 1891.

DEAR DE WINDT,

You ask me to tell you what I saw of the prisons this year in Siberia and Central Asia.

While staying at Yeniseïsk (Siberia) in March last (1891) I was taken over the prison there by the District Judge, a gentleman of the name of Baroch, who is the visitor appointed by government. There is no governor of the prison, his functions being exercised by a chief warder, a Pole who was formerly in the army. He escorted us through the building—a large two-storied one—striking me more as though it had been converted into a prison, than built especially for that purpose, so different is it to the model system now in use in this country.

We passed through the corridors and were shown cells of all sizes containing numbers varying from one solitary inmate to as many as fifty in one hall; these latter being chiefly vagrants without passports and therefore, presumably, worthless characters. There seemed to be a marked absence of any separation of the prisoners by classes. The convicted murderers (of whom there were more than fifty) appeared to be kept

apart as a class, though of them I counted as many as twelve or fourteen in one room. Murders are somewhat frequent in Siberia in the summer, when escaped convicts from the Karâ mines, and other penal settlements, wander about and commit many acts of violence ; and there being no capital punishment in Russia the prisons contain many convicted murderers. In the Yeniseïsk prison there were some six or eight men in solitary confinement and in chains, but their cells were light and fairly spacious, and the occupants appeared to receive the same food as the other prisoners. One or two even had tobacco, in the form of Russian cigarettes or "papirossi." The whole prison was well warmed and lighted, and, judging from the bread I saw lying about in the wards, the prisoners are not stinted in the way of food. The rations issued comprise soup, meat, tea, and sugar ; the prisoners being employed in the kitchens, as in prisons in England. There is also a bath (the usual Russian vapour one) for the use of the prisoners. In a separate wing I saw about a dozen women prisoners, either convicted or awaiting trial. These women were engaged in washing clothes, and there appeared to be as many children as women. It appears to be often the case in this country that the very young children share their parents' captivity.

Tashkent Prison (Russian Central Asia).

Under this heading, my notes run as follows :—

Two hundred and fourteen prisoners altogether, of whom forty-one (chiefly political prisoners) are leaving to-morrow on their long march to Siberia, to the penal settlements at the Karâ mines. These political prisoners

are Sarts, and have been at Samarkand some seven or eight years awaiting a final decision on their case. I understood the Deputy Governor to say that they were convicted in the year 1883. Those who are under light sentences, and in prison for a few weeks only, are locked up in good-sized, bright, airy rooms, about six together; some few are alone. Soldiers under sentence are in more comfortable rooms, in batches of three. The dark cells were not prepossessing. The men are given strong doses—two or three weeks at a time. There are murderers here in confinement awaiting trial. When convicted they proceed to Siberia as soon as possible, and those starting on the following day were all in chains, rather heavy-looking chains too. Certainly their housing, etc., is very good. I went through the kitchens. Daily ration—two pounds of bread, quarter of a pound of meat, soup and vegetables, all excellent in quality. A recent Government prison inspector advised that the fast days should be observed in order to reduce the amount of food that the convicts get. The drink issued to the inmates of the prison is kvas. That I tasted was excellent, and had a lump of ice in it.

Truly a lot of nonsense is written about the terrors of Russian prisons! Plenty of air and light in the rooms (which can hardly be called cells), and a view of a green garden from the windows; a room set apart as a "native church," where the prisoners, who are mostly natives, are allowed to pray four or five times a day. As it is a religious festival with the natives, the prisoners are not at work, but are having interviews (allowed once a week) with their brethren of the outer world, whom they may see through a double grating, with gaolers standing in the intervening space. I went

round the workshops. About six or eight tailors, also prisoners, were making prison clothing, the cloth for which is spun by native prisoners. In other shops there were bootmakers, and I was informed that the prisoners receive from one quarter to one third of the value of their work as remuneration, the scale of payment depending on the conduct of the prisoner and the crime for which he is in prison. The beds in the wards and cells are turned up during the daytime against the wall, like the cadets' beds at Woolwich, to prevent the prisoners sleeping. The prison guard consisted of sixteen men, furnishing four posts. The prisoners are frequently employed at work on the roads, also in the large well-stocked prison kitchen garden of about five acres.

I then went across to a separate block of buildings occupied by the female prisoners, of whom there were only four, one a Russian, the other three natives. A small boy about two years old, the child of one of the latter, lay fast asleep on the floor. When his mother, who is sentenced to hard labour, goes to Siberia, the boy will be placed in one of the "preyoutes" or refuges, where the children of convicts find a home and are educated. Such refuges are to be met with in very many Russian towns. Women are not made to march with the gangs proceeding to Siberia, but are, like the better class of prisoners, conveyed thither in vehicles. In another wing were misdemeanants of a more privileged class, one of whom, a bankrupt merchant, the occupant of a comfortable apartment, is awaiting the decision of the court with regard to his affairs, and the settlement of how much he can pay in the pound. If fraud be proved against him he will be sent to Siberia. There was also an officer under sentence of

six months for striking a man. Not being, what is called, "deprived of rights" he will be able to resume his rank and post, but practically he will have to retire.

SAMARKAND PRISON (CENTRAL ASIA).

I was taken over the Samarkand prison by General Pougáloff, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Samarkand province, and one of the pioneer civilizers to whom the new Russian town is indebted for much of its present beauty, its fine open spaces, and public gardens.

As we were driving to the prison, the site of which occupies a slight eminence outside the town, the general assured me that no notice had been sent of his visiting the prison. Entering through an iron gateway from the road, two one-storied blocks presented themselves to view, the remainder of the enclosure being occupied by a fruit and kitchen garden, a guard-house, and the prison workshops. General Pougáloff accompanied me all round the building, which in internal arrangements much resembled that of Tashkent, but, if anything, was cleaner and brighter. Passing through the kitchens we inspected the food, which appeared to be ample in quantity.

The general has evidently closely studied a system of employment of criminals in the prisons of Western Europe, and it has been his endeavour to find employment for the inmates of the Samarkand prison. The cotton that is so largely grown in this district is woven into cloth in one of the workshops fitted up with looms for the purpose, and in another workshop the material is made up into clothing for the prisoners. There are also carpenters' and turners' shops. The furniture and other

woodwork so turned out by the prisoners is exposed for sale in a room near the entrance to the prison.

To judge from what I saw and from all I heard while travelling in Siberia and Russian Central Asia, the treatment of criminals in the prisons is certainly of a lenient character. Earnest endeavours are being made to give employment to the prisoners, but this, in a country where manufactures are so backward, is very difficult to effect. Besides which it may be pointed out that, owing to there being no capital punishment in Russia, there must always be in these prisons a certain number of convicted murderers, who have not the same incentive to good conduct as those who may shorten their sentences by good behaviour.*

TIFLIS PRISONS (CAUCASUS).

By the kindness of the governor, Prince Shérvasheedzy, I was given an introduction to the director of prisons, Monsieur Devdaryany, who conducted me over the prisons and refuge for the children of convicts. The prison in the town occupies an eminence on the north side of the river. Here there are three or four hundred prisoners undergoing sentences. In this case also, the absence of employment on a large scale was apparent. Proceeding next to the outside of the town, we approached a mass of low buildings, where convicts about to proceed to Siberia are confined. Here were many men in chains, which were fastened to shackles round the ankles, the chain being caught in the middle by a cord fastened to a waist-belt. There are no chains on the hands or arms. The irons appeared to be light

* This can only apply to Central Asia. In Siberia every sentence may be shortened by good conduct.—H. DE W.

steel ones,' much like those worn a few years ago by convicts in England when being transported by rail. In another wing of this prison were juvenile offenders, for whom daily schooling is arranged.

From this prison it was a relief to drive to the refuge mentioned above with its fine flower gardens and unrivalled view of the town of Tiflis and mountains of Georgia, which shut in the valley of the swift-flowing Kurá. The occupants of the home were some thirty or forty children, both boys and girls, varying from about six to twelve years old, at which latter age it is endeavoured to find situations for the boys, where they can be apprenticed and learn a trade. The children's parentage is carefully concealed from them. They never know their parents, and, I may add, their happy faces bore testimony to the good work done by this institution (only a type of many throughout Russia), which is almost entirely supported by private charity.

I am sorry that it is not in my power to give you fuller information on the subject of Russian prisons. I only found myself a visitor in those I have named by the courtesy of the Russian officials with whom I happened to come in contact, and may add that in no single instance where I made application was I refused admittance into any civil public institution.

Yours sincerely,

E. ST. C. PEMBERTON.

To Harry de Windt, Esq.,
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on 15 October, 2018